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THE 11TH-GRADE COURSE OF STUDY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE PRESENTED IN THE STUDENT PACKET FOR THE NEBRASKA ENGLISH CURRICULUM BEGINS WITH A UNIT ENTITLED "INDIVIDUALISM AND IDEALISM" IN WHICH STUDENTS ANALYZE SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES BY EMERSON, THOREAU, WHITMAN, AND DICKINSON. NEXT, THE THEME OF SIN AND LONELINESS AS IT LIMITS INDIVIDUALISM IS EXPLORED IN "THE SCARLET LETTER," "BILLY BUDD," "THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN," AND "THE UNVANQUISHED." "BABBITT," "THE GREAT GATSBY," AND "THE WASTELAND" PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A CONSIDERATION OF SATIRE WHICH EXPOSES MATERIALISM AND CONFORMITY. CATHER AND FROST ARE STUDIED IN "MY ANTONIA," "THE WITCH OF COOS," AND "NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY" AS WRITERS WHO SEARCH FOR A FORM INTRINSIC IN THEIR SUBJECTS. LITERATURE UNITS STRESS EVALUATION OF THE WRITERS' CONCEPTS AND PURPOSES, ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED, AND EXPLICATION OF THE LITERARY WORKS. LANGUAGE UNITS EMPHASIZE THE RHETORIC OF THE PARAGRAPH AND THE MASTERY OF DICTION IN ESSAY-WRITING. STUDY-HELPS INCLUDE OVERVIEWS, INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS, WRITING EXERCISES, READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, AND LITERARY SELECTIONS NOT READILY AVAILABLE IN TEXTBOOKS. THIS MANUAL IS AVAILABLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA CURRICULUM CENTER, 231 ANDREWS HALL, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68508. THE RELATED TEACHER PACKET FOR GRADE 11 IS TE 000 067. (RD)

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Student Packet

Grade 11

MAN AND NATURE:

INDIVIDUALISM AND IDEALISM:

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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TE000 068

## OVERVIEW:

This unit initiates a series of units devoted to the study of American literature, and particularly to four themes that are characteristic of the major periods in American Literature. This unit begins by focusing on some major works written during what Lewis Mumford calls the "golden day" of American civilization, a time before the Civil War when the American political experiment had apparently succeeded, when the problems created by industrialism and technology were, if they existed, still in their incipient stages, when America was still looked upon as a Promised Land in which man could realize his full potentiality. Thus, the literary works of Emerson, Thoreau and the early Whitman are replete with an optimism with which, after two world wars, we may have a difficult time sympathizing. This optimism derived from a profound belief in the divinity of man, in man's capability to become God, to participate in the Oversoul. And because of a profound belief in the goodness and integrity of the individual man, the European habit of thinking in terms of society (cf. Beowulf, The Song of Roland, The Journey Novel) is rejected for thinking in terms of the individual; for these writers, one does not find his fulfillment in submitting to and obeying the conventions and traditions of society, but in obeying the dictates of his conscience and the intuitive hints gained from contemplating the divine in nature and in himself. Thus, the title of the unit--Spiritual Autobiography.

After the Civil War and after a probing of the assumptions implicit in the thought and attitudes of Emerson, Thoreau, and the early Whitman, this optimism begins to waver. In his later poems, Whitman espouses a muted optimism and Dickinson in some of her poems investigates the implications of relying on one's intuition.

This unit assumes another kind of importance in the context of the series devoted to American literature. Writers who succeed those considered in this unit devote a good part of their energies to attacking, refining, and defending the ideas discussed here. Most important, perhaps, is the re-evaluation of the individual's role in society and of the optimistic frame of mind which permeates the works of Emerson and Thoreau. Development of technology and industry and the consequent development of an industrial, business-oriented urban society; the advent of science and skepticism; and the end of the frontier--all of these raise problems which force a re-evaluation of the doctrines of Emerson and his contemporaries.

### I. Emerson:

In this section we are going to look at four essays by Emerson, the first exponent of the transcendentalist school to express its ideas and attitudes in a forceful way and perhaps the most original of the first generation transcendentalists. Your teacher will probably provide you with information about the traditions out of which American transcendentalism evolves; it is imperative, however, to view Emerson not as a philosopher, or one concerned with the construction of a philosophic system, but as a moralist, a preacher, or as one concerned with changing the attitudes of Americans. While he is a philosopher in that he deals with questions of man's ultimate end, of man's relationship to the world, etc., in his essays he is primarily a preacher and a moralist. Because Emerson, in his writings, does not seek to persuade men to give intellectual assent to a



philosophical system, but seeks to root out of Americans those attitudes which he regards as detrimental and inhibiting, and to replace those attitudes with what he takes to be better ones, his essays take on a rather peculiar form, or, as some of his critics would charge, no form at all. Our task in this section of the unit will be to try to account for the peculiar nature of Emerson's essays as well as to get at what Emerson is saying.

#### A. The Oversoul:

We will first look at the essay, "The Oversoul," which is one of the central works in the Emersonian canon. Because this is our initial encounter with Emerson, we will proceed rather slowly and carefully. Here in summary form is what Emerson says in this essay: the major point made in "The Oversoul" is that man has a divine, intuitive self, and it is this self that is the essence of man. Conventions and traditions have repressed this self; have held man a slave and kept him from becoming what he could and should become. This becoming is achieved, according to Emerson, by recognizing that man's body and his creations are manifestations of his soul, and that through nature, the garment of God, man can communicate in mystical fashion with the source of his being, the Oversoul. This recognition of the divine in man and communication with his source takes man beyond surface conventions and postures to the full recognition of "selfhood." This is pretty high-powered stuff and the question we want to ask ourselves is how Emerson found all this out, or who told him all this. And then we want to look at the way Emerson expresses these ideas. A rather rapid reading of this essay will be a helpful preparation for the questions below.

#### Study Questions:

(1) In the first few sentences Emerson argues that among the myriad of events in his life, some events possess a quality that others do not, and that these events, because of that quality, lead us to "ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences." Now, there is a rather obvious question to ask here: Who is the "us"? By "us," Emerson may be referring to those who share the same position that he does, or to all his readers. There are at least these two alternatives. If he uses it in the first sense, then he must be addressing himself to his intellectual cronies; the essay will then be a kind of pep talk; it will become an attempt to inspire his fellow-believers to keep the faith. But if we assume that Emerson is referring to his readers, to us, then his essay takes on a different dimension; and, in addition, raises a rhetorical problem. How can Emerson be sure that one will identify with his "us"? His procedure seems to be something like this: he begins with what he takes to be a commonplace and, after he thinks he has us accepting the commonplace, which he purposely states generally and vaguely, he establishes an opposition, the objector or "he." This technique assures Emerson that his reader will identify himself with the "us."

(2) Look at the sentence beginning "For this reason. . . ." Here Emerson argues that the "appeal to experience" is "forever invalid and vain." What is "this reason"?

(3) In the subsequent part of this paragraph, Emerson uses the interrogative form rather than the declarative. Why?

(4) Emerson suggests that the philosophy of six thousand years has not done

all it should. He says it has not searched the "chambers and magazines of the soul." To what is he comparing the soul when he ascribes to it "chambers and magazines"?

(5) What allows Emerson to compare man to a stream with a hidden source?

(6) How did Emerson find out that we don't know the source of our being? Haven't other writers and thinkers told us?

(7) Why is Emerson "constrained" to acknowledge a higher power than his own will? Is there any significance in the change from the plural to the singular in the first person pronoun? If so, what?

(NOTE: Throughout this section of the unit, our analysis will proceed by paragraphs. To help you find your place, we will cite the opening words of the page number of each paragraph to be analyzed.)

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"As with events...(p. 126)."

The first paragraph of this essay raises several questions, questions like those above. These questions are not easily answered; perhaps they cannot be completely answered at this time, but they must be answered eventually if we are to make sense out of this essay.

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The second paragraph draws a comparison between events and thoughts; this paragraph asserts that what has been said about events can also be said of thought. We will only pause here long enough to note some of the language Emerson uses. He refers to himself as a "pensioner", as a "surprised spectator" and he refers to "visions." What does this language suggest about his relationship to "that river"?

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"The Supreme Critic...(p. 126)."

This paragraph opens with an interesting sentence. In this sentence, Emerson uses the device of expansion: Supreme Critic = nature = unity = oversoul = common heart = over-powering reality. What we are witnessing here is Emerson's attempt to find the appropriate language to describe what he is trying to describe. Emerson's problem is something like this: He has told us that the "appeal to experience is forever invalid and vain;" what he is attempting to describe therefore is something that lies outside our normal experience. But our language, the language that Emerson has at his disposal, is language created or invented to describe normal experience. So we might say that Emerson has to take our ordinary

or common language--the language of the experiences which he rejects--and transform it, wrench it, imbue it with new meaning so that he can describe what is outside our normal experience.

Now, if we suppose that this is an acceptable formulation of Emerson's problem, does it help to explain why Emerson uses expansion devices and synonyms throughout this sentence? Why he uses parallelism, why he uses "and," why he writes: "Wisdom and virtue and power and beauty?" Then look at the second sentence in this paragraph and ask the same questions. Or you might revise the question: Emerson appears to have a thesaurus on his desk; why all the synonyms? As you look at the rest of this paragraph, note Emerson's use of expansion and of parallelism. In your own words, attempt to explain why he uses it.

Explain Emerson's distinction between profane and sacred words.

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"If we consider...(p. 127)."

In this paragraph, Emerson tells us what the soul is not. Does he also tell us what it is? If he does, what kind of language does he use to describe it?

Emerson says "Man is the facade of a temple." What does this metaphor imply? Why might Emerson call man a facade of a temple, and not the temple itself? If man is the facade, what is the temple? Does the next sentence help you explain what Emerson means by "man" when he says "man is the facade"? Why does he make a distinction between what "we commonly call man" and his peculiar use of the word "man"? Is it related to his previous distinction between profane and sacred words?

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"The sovereignty of this nature...(p. 128)."

Here Emerson says "it [the soul] contradicts all experience." This comes as no surprise since he has already told us that the "appeal to experience is forever invalid and vain." But one might well become uneasy at this point. In the preceding paragraph he has told us that "of this pure nature every man is at some time sensible." Is not this sense of "pure nature" also an experience? If it is, then isn't Emerson talking nonsense? Before we decide that Emerson is talking nonsense let us remind ourselves that he may be talking in "profane language." Would it be possible to qualify the sentence by writing, "As I have said, it contradicts all of what we normally call experience"? Is this qualification allowable? Do the following sentences help define what experience Emerson is talking about? Why or why not?

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"We are often made to feel...(p. 129)."

How is this paragraph related to the discussion of time and space in the earlier paragraph? Or is it?

Later in this paragraph Emerson distinguishes two facts? The external and the permanent. What is the significance of this distinction? How does Emerson arrive at it? Is it related to previous distinctions?

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We have by now raised some fundamental questions about what Emerson is doing in this essay and we have perhaps suggested how we might answer those questions. In the following section, you will find less detailed questions and less commentary than previously. And you might very well find yourself asking other questions as you read along; do not ignore such questions. Write them down in your notebook and work with them. This is to say that the questions below are serviceable questions, but not the only ones that might be asked.

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1. "After its own law...(p. 130)." In this paragraph, Emerson represents the growth of the soul as metamorphosis. How is this related to his concept of time and space? If he denies the existence of time and space, must he reject chronological and spatial metaphors? And if he must, what kind of metaphors can be used? Is metamorphosis one of these metaphors?

2. "This is the law of moral...(p. 130)." How can Emerson say: "Speak to his heart, and the man becomes suddenly virtuous."? Is he using "heart" and "virtuous" in their "profane" senses? If not, what do they mean?

3. "Within the same...(p. 130)." What is the "moral beatitude" Emerson refers to?

4. "One made of the divine teaching...(p. 131)." Emerson writes: But the larger experience of man discovers the identical nature appearing through them all." Emerson appeals to experience but he has said that the appeal to experience is forever invalid and vain and that the soul contradicts experience. Can you rescue Emerson from this dilemma?

b. "Persons themselves acquaint us with the impersonal." Is Emerson simply playing with words?

c. How can we "know better than we do"?

5. "The soul is the perceiver and revealer...(p. 132)." Here we have an interesting idea. "We know truth when we see it, let sceptic and scoffer say what they choose." What does Emerson mean by "seeing"? With what kind of eye is he seeing?

6. "We distinguish the announcements of the soul...(p. 153)." Emerson has been



using religious language throughout this essay: Judgment, Millennium (p. 129); incarnation (p. 131); Advent (p. 133). And now he uses the word "Revelation." Does he use these terms in the same way that they are used in traditional religious talk? Would a Calvinist be likely to use the word "Revelation" in the same way Emerson does? What is Emerson up to here?

b. In this paragraph, Emerson again talks about "the power to see." He has previously said that we know truth when we see it. Does seeing and knowing truth have any consequences?

c. Emerson equates the experiences of some rather diverse men and groups of men. What is his warrant for doing so?

7. "The nature of these revelations...(p. 134)." "The soul answers never by words, but by the thing itself that is inquired after." What does this mean? What is the difference between the understanding and the soul? Why does Emerson make this distinction? These questions should be considered in the light of the succeeding paragraph. Notice these words and phrases: "sensual questions," "this low curiosity," "sensual fortunes," "doctrine of immortality." What connotations does Emerson attach to these words? What is their opposite?

8. "The great distinction between teachers... (p. 137)." In this paragraph we have a series of oppositions:

sacred	literary
Herbert	Pope
Spinoza, etc.	Locke, etc.
from within	from without

Can you elaborate the distinction Emerson is making?

b. Emerson suggests that only that which comes from "within" is worthy of being said or taught. If this is the case, then, a teacher must try to communicate his own "visions," his own "mystical experiences." This is the only valid material for Emerson. Explain the consequences of this for the teacher. What does Emerson mean by "teacher"? To what must the teacher appeal in order to persuade men? Can you outline the problem such a teacher must face?

c. "I believe beforehand it ought so to be." Is Emerson a good scientist? A good thinker?

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The next few paragraphs are devoted to a discussion of "genius." Again Emerson distinguishes between how we normally use the word and how he uses it. Describe how Emerson uses it.

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"Ineffable is the union of man and God...(p. 140)."

Emerson says that "the simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God." Aside from using a statement that must have shocked Emerson's con-

temporaries and perhaps modern readers, this statement is interesting in its use of the word "worship." What does Emerson mean by that word? Does his subsequent reference to "our god of tradition" and "our god of rhetoric" help explain what the object of this worship is? Does the distinction between "connection" and "sight" suggest the way in which this worship is carried out?

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"It makes no difference whether...(p. 142)."

Emerson says, "The faith that stands on authority is not faith." OK. What is faith then?

#### B. Self-Reliance:

In the opening sentence of this essay, Emerson employs what must be his favorite device, the opposition of conventionality and originality. By now, this device should be familiar to us. But then he begins to distinguish between sentiment and thought. What is the difference? If he makes such a distinction, why does Emerson forget about the "more valuable" sentiment in the succeeding sentences? Or does he?

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"There is time in every man's...(p. 166)."

1. Emerson here says "every man," not some men. In the preceding paragraph he has said that "The soul always hears. . .," "In every work of genius. . ." Emerson usually sprinkles such words through his prose. Are we to take these words in the same way that we do in logic? Is Emerson simply being reckless with the truth? Perhaps we must read carefully: notice it is the "soul" that "always hears;" and it is "every work of genius," and it is "every man." It then appears that when we read these apparently reckless statements we must attend to Emerson's meaning of the words, "soul," "genius" and "man." We must try to determine if they are used in their profane or sacred usages.

2. In this same paragraph, Emerson writes a sentence that employs parallel expansion. And each member of the parallelism is puzzling. For instance, in what way is envy ignorance? The juxtaposition of these words is interesting. Envy belongs to that group of words that describe moral conditions or attitudes; ignorance belongs to that class which describes the extent of one's knowledge. Is Emerson saying anything about the relationship of morality and knowledge? Or is the juxtaposition misleading? How can imitation be suicide? imitation of what?

3. What is "This sculpture"?

4. What is the meaning of: "It is a deliverance which does not deliver"? Note the play on words. Does Emerson use this device in other places? What does it allow him to do?

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"Trust thyself: every heart...(p. 166)."

1. How is "Trust thyself" an "iron string"?
  2. If one confides himself "childlike to the genius" of the age, is he not likely to be an imitator, to be a suicide? Why "betraying"? Has Emerson chosen the right word?
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"What pretty oracles...(p. 167)."

1. Is this paragraph in any way related to the previous paragraphs?
  2. What is "this text" in the first line? What is Emerson's attitude toward infants? Does he just like babies? Is he a doting grandfather? Or does he use the child as an emblem for an attitude, for philosophical perspective? (Note: It might be interesting to compare St. Augustine's use of the child as an emblem for humility. Does Emerson use the child to represent humility or something else? Can one be self-reliant and humble at the same time?)
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"These are the voices...(p. 168)."

"Society everywhere is in conspiracy. . ."

"Society is a joint-stock company. . ."

Is Emerson defining society here? What is his attitude toward it? What is the "culture of the eater"?

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"Whoso would be a man...(p. 168)."

1. The first sentence is interesting. Might it be restated: "All men are non-conformists"? Now obviously all men are not nonconformists; what's going on here? Is Emerson using "man" in a peculiar sense? If so, what is it? What does he mean by nonconformist? Simply one who does not conform to society? Or must his nonconformity be a specific brand?
2. "Absolve you to yourself" What metaphor is implicit here? Who usually does "absolving"? Absolve what?
3. How does Emerson determine right from wrong, good from bad? Recall what he said about distinguishing truth and falsity in the "Oversoul;" is he saying much the same thing here?
4. Emerson says he would write "on the lintels of the door-post, Whim." Look at

Exodus 12: 22. What is Emerson alluding to here? Why does he so allude? What does he mean by "whim"?

5. What is his attitude toward philanthropy? To what is his attitude due?

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"Virtues are, in the popular...(p. 169)."

Look carefully at the sentence: "There is the man and his virtues." Emerson is here attacking the notion that the man and his virtues are separate. Why? How does he view the relationship between men and their virtues? between a man and his actions?

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"The objection...(p. 170)."

Why is conformity called a game? Why specifically blind-man's-buff? Why not poker or baseball? Why does Emerson say a preacher is a retained attorney?

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"But why should...(p. 172)."

1. Why the allusion to Joseph? What story does Emerson have in mind?

2. Emerson has been saying a good deal about "consistency" and continues to do so in the next paragraph. What does he mean by that word? Is it the same as conformity? A great soul, says Emerson, has nothing to do with consistency. Consistency in what sense? Then look at the paragraph beginning, "I suppose no man can violate his nature." How is Emerson using the word "man"? And then look at the succeeding paragraph: Is this "agreement" the same as "consistency" or "conformity"?

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"The magnetism which all...(p. 176)."

1. "...when we inquire the reason of self-trust." What is the reason, according to Emerson? If self-trust is founded on spontaneity or instinct, what distinguishes man from animals? Does such a question occur to Emerson?

2. "...knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due." What does Emerson mean by perception? How does it differ from opinions and notions? If there are involuntary perceptions, are there also voluntary ones? If involuntary perceptions lead to a perfect faith, what do voluntary ones lead to?

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In the paragraph cited above, Emerson talks about "the sense of being which in calm hours arises. . .," and, in the paragraph, "Man is timid. . .," he says that "he dares not say 'I think,' 'I am', . . ." Does this paragraph help explain what Emerson means by "the sense of being"? Look at the last sentence; is it helpful in explaining this term? How can one live "with nature in the present, above time"? Isn't the present in time?

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"Life only avails, not the having lived...(p. 179)."

1. In this paragraph, Emerson talks about the soul becoming. What soul? What does becoming mean here? What does it become? What is it before it becomes? Does the first sentence of the next paragraph help? What does this phrase mean: the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE?
  2. Is Emerson a Machiavellian when he says, in the next paragraph, that power is the essential measure of right? Does he qualify that statement in any peculiar way?
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"The populace think that your rejection...(p. 182)."

What is "mere antinomianism"? How does Emerson refute the charge of antinomianism? Again Emerson uses the word "absolve." If one can absolve himself, who is the judge? By what criteria does one judge his actions? ". . .if I can discharge its debts it enables me to dispense with the popular code." What if he can't discharge its debts? Whose debts?

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In the following paragraphs, Emerson attacks various aspects of society. What reforms does he propose? What attitudes underlie these reforms?

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"Society is a wave...(p. 190)."

Society has previously been a conspiracy and a joint-stock company. Why does Emerson change the metaphor here? Why is its "unity" only "phenomenal"? What does such a statement mean?

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"So use all that is called Fortune...(p. 191)."

Is Emerson against gambling? Why or why not? How are "cause and effect" the "chancellors of God"? What is the relationship of fortune to cause and effect?

Perhaps it would be well to recall the sentence about living "with nature in the present, above time."

### C. The Divinity School address:

1. The first two paragraphs contrast with one another. In the first paragraph the key sentence is: "One is constrained to respect the perfection of this world in which our senses converse." In the second paragraph, Emerson talks about the mind. What are the differences that Emerson sees between sense and intellectual perception?

b. The first sentence of the second paragraph needs to be examined carefully. What is "the mind"? "this mind"? Are the two "minds" the same one? What is the meaning of the phrase, "into a mere illustration and fable of this mind"? Is the "human spirit" the "mind"? How does Emerson use the word "entertainments"?

2. "A more secret, sweet. . . (p. 70)." More secret, sweet than what? What does virtue mean, for Emerson? In the "Oversoul" he insists that one cannot separate the man from his virtue. Does he still insist on this?

b. Emerson says, "When in innocency or when by intellectual perception. . ." Are these the same states? How do they differ from one another?

3. "The sentiment of virtue is a reverence... (p. 70)." In this paragraph Emerson suggests how man knows right from wrong; he describes the way to moral knowledge. In your own words can you describe Emerson's views? Or is it impossible to do so? Note: "These laws refuse to be adequately stated." If moral laws cannot be stated, then why is Emerson writing, or what does he suggest as an alternative to stating them? What does this imply about language? Note that in the next paragraph, Emerson talks about intuition and resorts not to a definition of the laws of the soul, but examples of how these laws work.

4. "See how this rapid intrinsic energy... (p. 71). What energy? What about the senses? Does this clarify to some extent the first paragraph? In saying "man is made the Providence to himself," how does Emerson change the use of the word, Providence. Has Emerson in any of the previous paragraphs suggested something about the divinity of man? What seems to be Emerson's conception of evil and good? How did he find out that "Thefts never enrich," that "murder will speak out of stone walls"?

5. "These facts have always suggested. . . (p. 72)." Have they "always"? What is the meaning of the sentences, "Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute"? Is this to say that evil is merely the absence of good? If it is, does evil really exist? What are the consequences of evil or the absence of good? Look carefully at the last sentence: "his being shrinks"; he becomes less and less, a note, a point." In "Self-Reliance," we heard Emerson say "the soul becomes," but here he uses the word in the sense of metamorphosis, an analogy he has used before. The soul here becomes "less and less" until it becomes a point, perhaps the "still point" in the sense that Aristotle uses it--that state at which a thing no longer moves. This for Emerson is death and evil.



6. "This sentiment is divine. . .(p. 73)." What sentiment? What does Emerson mean by "beatitude"? by "infant man"? In the next paragraph, Emerson suggests the consequences of this sentiment "in society." What are they?

7. "These general views. . .(p. 74)."

a. Emerson now turns, after his prefatory remarks, to a criticism of the Christian church, to "two errors in its administration." Does Emerson view Christ in the same way that orthodox Christians have and do? Is there something heterodox in the phrase, "God incarnates himself in man"? Would the orthodox Christian substitute "Jesus" for man?

b. Look carefully at the sentence, "Would you see God, see me. . ." Emerson here alludes to Christ's saying, "He who has seen me has seen the father" but notice that he changes the import of the verse, for he adds "or sees thee. . ." What is Emerson's view of Christ? Of other men?

c. What is the meaning of the sentence: "There is no doctrine. . ." What distinction is he making between Reason and Understanding? Has Emerson used "Reason" previously? What did it mean there? Is Reason the same as intuition? What, then, is the Understanding? In the next few sentences, Emerson makes a distinction between Christ's rhetoric and truth. Is this distinction valid? What view of rhetoric or language is implied here?

d. What is Emerson's view of miracles? Why does he call miracles, "as pronounced by Christian churches," a monster?

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"The divine bards are the friends. . .(p. 77)."

1. "Noble provocations go out from them. . ." What does Emerson mean by "provocations"? Earlier he has said: "Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or reject. . ." Then provocations invite Emerson "to Be." What does he mean by that? Is "to Be" in any way related to "becoming," to "good"?

2. "To aim to convert a man by miracles. . ." Emerson here, as when he previously referred to miracles, is probably assuming that the students whom he is addressing have read and been instructed in those works which base proof for Christ's divinity on the miracles of Christ. Since at least the middle of the 17th Century, Christian apologists when facing the claims of the Scientists and deists had sought to demonstrate Christ's divinity by reference to the miracles.

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"The injustice of the vulgar tone. . .(p. 77)."

What does Emerson object to in the preaching of his contemporaries?

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Emerson's second objection to the church of his time is the view of revelation that it proclaims. He argues that the church views revelation as a past act and fails to perceive that revelation is an on-going act. This is not the first time we have encountered this idea. In "The Oversoul," Emerson, you will recall, had something to say about Space and Time and man's relationship to it. In the same essay he talked about Revelation. A review of these passages might be helpful here.

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"The man enamored of this excellency. . . (p. 78)."

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In this paragraph we again encounter Emerson talking about "being": "he only can create, who is." What does Emerson mean here? Notice that in this paragraph, Emerson continues to give religious terminology new or different meanings: "priest or poet"; "they shall bring him the gift of tongues." And he continues to do so in the first sentence of the next paragraph: "this holy office." To what does this phrase usually refer? How does Emerson change its meaning? Why does he use the word "call" in the next sentence?

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"Let me not taint the sincerity of this plea. . . (p. 82)."

---

What does Emerson mean by "historical Christianity"? Is the use of "historical" accidental? If not, what distinction is implied here?

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"My friends, in these two errors. . . (p. 83)."

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What are the consequences, as Emerson sees it, of the "decaying church"? Emerson here is working with an argument that, like the arguments about miracles, had been used by the defenders of Christianity. Burke, for instance, argued that religion was a necessary part of the state, for without it the state would become an anarchy, e.g., the French Revolution. Emerson here has shown that the "religion" proclaimed by such as Burke has disastrous consequences; and that a new or true religion must be found to replace it.

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"And now, my brothers. . . (p. 83)."

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How does Emerson propose to rectify the errors that he sees in the church? What does he have to say about imitation? "Imitation is suicide." Does that help?

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"In such high communion. . .(p. 86)."

What does Emerson mean by a "bold benevolence"? by "the dictators of fortune"? Has Emerson talked about Fortune before?

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"And now let us. . .(p. 87)."

"Faith makes us. . .All attempts to contrive a system are as cold as the new worship introduced by the French to the goddess of Reason. . ." Does Emerson use Reason here in the same way as he has previously? Is there an implicit distinction between this usage of Reason and the previous ones?

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#### D. Compensation:

By this time, you are fairly well acquainted with the themes that permeate Emerson's writings. So we are going to approach this essay from a different perspective. But before we do so, you should read through the essay, jotting down notes and summarizing Emerson's arguments.

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Many of the passages in this essay are characterized by parallelism. If you look at the paragraph on p. 106-107, beginning "The same dualism underlies," you will notice that there are several parallel clauses and sentences. Now we must ask, is this parallelism accidental or purposeful? Parallelism, by its very nature suggests equivalence; the very act of casting different notions, different words, into the same grammatical and rhetorical structures suggest that the notions are coordinate, of the same rank, at least from the writer's point of view. So, Emerson is suggesting equivalences here. But are these suggestions appropriate?

Let us back up a moment to see what has gone before. If we look at the paragraph at the top of page 106, we discover another paragraph characterized by parallelism. Here we encounter a list of polarities, all expressed in parallelism or near-parallelism. The lists or the catalogue here function as examples to support the notion that polarity inheres in every part of nature. Does the very idea of polarity or opposites invite the use of parallelism. Why?

Now Emerson begins the paragraph with which we started, with "This same dualism underlies the nature and condition of man." Thus, he is using an analogy. An analogy between what and what? Does the use of parallelism in this paragraph strengthen the analogy? How?

Now compare these two paragraphs with the one beginning "These appearances indicate the fact. . ." on p. 108. Can you account for the use of parallelism here? Does the parallelism indicate any notional relationship with the paragraphs that we have previously looked at?

Another paragraph characterized by parallelism occurs on p. 110. "Whilst thus the world will be whole. . ." Can you explain its occurrence here?

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In Emerson's writing, and especially in this essay, another kind of repetition occurs, repetition, not of grammatical forms, but of words:

"Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess."

"For every grain of wit, there is a grain of folly."

"If riches increase, they are increased. . ."

"If the gatherer gathers too much. . ."

"This law writes the law of unities and rations. . ."

"Though no checks. . .appear, the checks exist and will appear."

"Men call the circumstance retribution. The causal retribution is in the thing and is seen by the soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding."

"Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit. . ."

"To dress that he may be dressed; to eat that he may eat."

"Pleasure is taken out of pleasant things, profit out of profitable things. . ."

"eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, blood for blood, measure for measure. . ."

Does Emerson repeat words because he can't think of new ones? Or is the repetition used for a rhetorical purpose? What is the effect of the repetition? Is it something like that of parallelism? Does it contribute to the aphoristic quality of Emerson's prose? And if it does, what advantage does this aphoristic quality give Emerson?

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#### Emerson's use of analogy:

Emerson is not noted for his use of metaphor and simile, but, in this essay he uses several:

- p. 104. It appeared moreover that if this doctrine could be stated in terms with any resemblance to those bright intuitions in which this truth is sometimes revealed to us, it would be a star in many dark hours and crooked passages in our journey, that would not suffer us to lose our way.

- p. 106. There is somewhat that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea. . .in a single needle of the pine. . .
- p. 107. . .nature takes out of the man what she puts into his chest. . .
- p. 109. The world globes itself in a drop of dew.  
The dice of God are always loaded.  
The world looks like a multiplication-table, or a mathematical equation.
- p. 110. Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit. . .for the effect already blooms in the cause. . .
- p. 111. That when the disease began in the will. . .the intellect is at once infected. . .he sees the mermaid's head but not the dragon's tail.
- p. 113. Proverbs. . .are the sanctuary of the intuitions.
- p. 114. It is a thread-ball thrown at a mark. . .  
Or rather it is a harpoon. . .  
We meet as water meets water, or as two currents of air mix. . .
- p. 115. He is a carrion crow. . .that obscene bird. . .
- p. 117. Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass.
- p. 118. Whilst he sits on the cushion of advantages. . .
- p. 120. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame. . .

These are only some of the metaphors that occur in this essay. You can probably find several more. How are these metaphors related to Emerson's ideas?

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#### Emerson's use of fables:

On page 111, Emerson writes, "It finds a tongue in literature unawares. Thus the Greeks called Jupiter, Supreme Mind. . ." What is the "it" that finds a tongue? What is the force of "thus"? You may find it necessary to reread the preceding paragraph.

Now explain this sentence on p. 112. "A plain confession of the in-working of the All and of its moral aim." Do you find here the "plain confession" Emerson sees? Can you think of any fable that is "not moral"? That does not point to "a crack"? Does Emerson find it necessary to interpret myths in a rather unorthodox manner? Is his view of Nemesis like that of his predecessors?

Emerson says that "the voice of fable has in it somewhat divine. It came from thought above the will of the writer." How does Emerson view the development of fables?

How does Emerson's use of fable or myth differ from that of previous writers you have studied? For what purpose does he introduce them?

### Discussion Questions:

1. You have now read representative essays by Emerson, and in your reading and studying of these essays you probably discovered that it is often difficult to get at or to paraphrase what Emerson is saying. One cannot easily extricate the content from its form. But then there seems to be a lack of form; we have pointed to it again and again. The essential problem then in Emerson is this apparent lack of form, the lack of which seems to frustrate his persuasive endeavor. Can you defend Emerson's apparent neglect of form? Is it in some way related to his way of knowing? to his audience? Does Emerson purposely write into his prose a kind of obscurity or formlessness to make his reader work at getting at what he is saying? How does Emerson view his task as a writer? Does he see himself as presenting dogma, or as a gadfly who only provokes, only hints, only intends to get his readers thinking for themselves? Does Emerson's view of language, his sliding between the sacred and the profane, account partially for the problems in his prose?
2. Emerson constantly reminds his reader that he must rely on his intuition and trust his own perceptions. What are the consequences for society of such a view of the individual? Is it possible to have a society in which every man relies on and follows his own intuition?
3. Emerson's view of evil raises some interesting problems. If, as he says, evil is an absence of good, and if, as he implies constantly, the world is good, how can there be an absence of good?
4. In his essay "Nature" Emerson says that "words are signs of natural facts." He argues: "Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance." He then cites these: Right means straight; wrong means twisted; spirit, wind; etc. What are the limitations of such a view of language? What does it imply about the relation of the natural world to the moral world? Would it surprise you if Emerson was to say that not only words are signs but all things are signs of the "spirit"? Now this raises interesting questions. How are we to know the meaning of a word if that word is a sign of a natural fact and the natural fact a sign of the "spirit"? Does not every word become equal to every other word? For instance, Emerson says, "For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, . . . in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes." Does this view of language allow one to discriminate between things? To assign varying values to things? Does it in part account for the difficulties in Emerson's prose?

### Emerson and His Rhetoric:

#### A. His Audience:

We have already examined Emerson's view of language. Now we turn to an examination of his rhetoric and such an examination must necessarily include his audience. What can you say about it? To whom is he addressing his remarks?



Can you infer from his essays what Emerson thinks about his readers? Does Emerson's conception of his audience make a difference as to how he proceeds?

### B. His Arguments:

When one writes spiritual autobiography, especially when his experiences differ radically from those of his audience's, he runs the danger of being labelled a "nut" or a "kook." Not only are Emerson's experiences different from most of his audience, but also, he cannot by the nature of his thought employ inductive or deductive arguments of the sort that we find in most expository prose.

Emerson, then, must depend a great deal upon ethical appeal. He must persuade his audience somehow that he is worth listening to. He must somehow suggest that he is not a "kook" or a "nut." He must convince his audience that the "hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law" are not due to some peculiar quirk in his own make-up. How does Emerson solve this problem? Does he? Look carefully at the kind of language and rhetorical techniques that he uses. You might begin by looking at the first paragraph of "The Oversoul."

### Emerson and Spiritual Autobiography:

If one writes spiritual autobiography, whether in essay form or not, he probably intends to instruct his audience, to persuade them that his own experience is worthy of attention and that it can be imitated. Emerson's experience, by its very nature, cannot be cast into rational form, into dogma. And if he is consistent with his own principles, he can in his own writing attempt only to persuade men to rely on their own individual intuition. Thus, about all Emerson can do is to try to point his audience in the right direction, to inculcate in them the attitudes that are necessary to rely on their own intuition; he cannot describe in any precise way the context of these intuitions. He can only prod, suggest, hint, and try to bring men to his own state; he can only try to regrind the lens through which men see the world.

Let us suppose now that you have been assigned the following task. You are to write an essay on Emerson's "Self-Reliance," and you choose to explore Emerson's comments on travel. As you do, you find yourself writing down your own thoughts about Emerson's ideas. When you receive your paper back from your teacher, there is a comment in the margin: "Who is interested in your opinions?" or "How can you presume to have any worthy ideas on the subject?" Suppose that you wish to defend yourself, and you turn to Emerson. Does he help you formulate a defence? Dig it out of the essays; think about it carefully.

Readers of Emerson have usually reacted to him strongly, either liking or disliking him. For instance, one critic said that if Emerson went to hell, the devil wouldn't know what to do with him. Others have found Emerson more to their liking, and some of them have been committed to the Christian faith. This suggests that they have not perceived Emerson's radical transformation of central Christian doctrines and the implications of many of his ideas. Can you

account for this failure to perceive what Emerson is saying? or is it simply that Emerson says all things to all men?

### Thoreau: Introduction:

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was a member of the Harvard graduating class to whom Emerson delivered his famous commencement address, "The American Scholar." Living in Concord, he became a disciple of Emerson and spent many hours at the house of the master. To Emerson, Thoreau must have seemed a perfect realization of the scholar, or man thinking, educated by books, action, and nature. As a disciple of Emerson, Thoreau liked and absorbed many of Emerson's ideas; in fact there are many passages in Thoreau's writings which echo his master's ideas. However, the styles of the two men were quite different.

Emerson recognized both Thoreau's debt and his originality when he remarked, "I am very familiar with all his thoughts--they are my own, quite originally dressed." And he went on to say, "Thoreau illustrates by excellent images that which I should have conveyed in sleepy generality."

Much of Walden is a protest against those factors of life which would restrict individuality. You will recall that Emerson had said, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." Thoreau took this idea literally; he revolted against conformity to the point of leaving society for over two years.

### Study Guide Questions

#### Chapter 1, "Economy"

1. Thoreau says, "I have travelled a good deal in Concord. . . (p. 7)." What is implied in this statement?
2. Why does Thoreau think it is a "misfortune" for his fellow townsmen to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, farming tools? (p. 9)
3. What evidence does Thoreau offer for his statement, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"? (p. 10) Is this evidence valid?
4. What are the "necessaries of life" according to Thoreau? (p. 13) Would modern man get along merely on these "necessaries"?
5. Thoreau says, "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers." (p. 14) What, exactly, is the difference? What is philosophy?
6. What does Thoreau think of organized charity? Does he agree with Emerson's views on philanthropy?

#### Chapter 2, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

1. What is appropriate about the date on which Thoreau started living his hut at Walden Pond?



2. Why, exactly, did Thoreau go to the woods? Find the paragraph in which he states his reasons. Describe the language in the paragraph.
3. What examples does Thoreau offer to illustrate his statement, "Our life is frittered away by detail," (p. 66) and what remedies does he propose?
4. Consider Thoreau's metaphors in the concluding paragraph of this chapter. Are they appropriate?

### Chapter 3, "Reading"

1. What books did Thoreau read during his stay at Walden Pond?
2. How does Thoreau define "classics"?
3. What is Thoreau's opinion of the "classics"?
4. What is Thoreau's opinion of the cultural level of Concord (p. 76)?

### Chapter 7, "The Bean-Field"

1. What is Thoreau's opinion of manual labor?
2. What does Thoreau mean when he says, "As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens. . ."? (p. 109)
3. What was Thoreau's reason for planting beans?
4. What lesson did Thoreau learn from his bean-raising experience?
5. What does this chapter on bean planting have to do with the over-all structure of Walden? What connection does it have with Chapter 1?

### Chapter 8, "The Village"

1. Why did Thoreau leave his retreat frequently to go into the village?
2. Why was Thoreau arrested while on one of his trips to the village?

### Chapter 11, "Higher Laws"

1. What objection does Thoreau raise to eating meat?
2. What value does Thoreau place on the virtue of chastity?
3. What, according to Thoreau, will chastity do for man?
4. Explain the significance of the title of this chapter: "Higher Laws."

## Chapter 12, "Brute Neighbors"

1. Who are the "Hermit" and the "Poet" who carry on a conversation at the beginning of this chapter. (pp. 151-152)
2. Explain the hermit's question: "Shall I go to heaven or a-fishing?" (p. 152)
3. Why does Thoreau devote so many pages to the activities of the animals he observed in the woods? Why does he write so approvingly of the habits of the animals? Why was he so much interested in the animals and so little interested, apparently, in the lives of his fellow men?
4. Read carefully pages 155-157; this passage from Walden is often printed in anthologies under the title: "The Battle of the Ants." What is Thoreau's tone in this passage? How would a literal-minded reader react to this passage? Why does Thoreau conclude this account of the battle by telling the reader that it ". . . took place in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill"?

## Chapter 14, "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors"

1. What reason does Thoreau find for the fact that the "former inhabitants" of the woods were unable to prosper there?
2. How did Thoreau spend his leisure time during the winter?
3. What reason does Thoreau give for the fact that a poet came to visit him during the winter?
4. What was Thoreau's reaction to the poet's visit?
5. Why does Thoreau describe the Connecticut philosopher as "the man of the most faith of any alive"?
6. What appealed to Thoreau in the behavior and attitude of the Connecticut philosopher?

## Chapter 17, "Spring"

1. Explain the metaphors in the paragraph beginning, "The phenomena of the year take place every day in a pond on a small scale." (p. 200)
2. What evidence does Thoreau offer for his statement, "In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven"? (p. 209)

## Chapter 18, "Conclusion"

1. Explain the significance of the statement, "The universe is wider than our views of it." (p. 212) Explain the statement in relation to the many observations of nature that Thoreau has made in the book.

2. Find the paragraph in which Thoreau states his reasons for leaving the woods. Compare this paragraph with the one in Chapter 2 in which he stated his reasons for going there in the first place. What are the similarities in the two paragraphs? What are the differences? (Pay particular attention to the manner of expression in the two paragraphs, the word choices, the diction.) How do these two paragraphs give a certain unity to the book?
3. What did Thoreau claim to have learned from his experiment? How can these "lessons" be applied to our lives today?

The Political Views of Thoreau: "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience"

1. What was Thoreau's main objection to the American government of the nineteenth century?
2. Does Thoreau imply that there should be no government at all?
3. What relationship does Thoreau think there should be between a man's conscience and the government? (p. 233)
4. What is Thoreau's opinion of voting? (pp. 226-227)
5. In what way is the following quotation from "Civil Disobedience" typical of Thoreau: "I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad"? (p. 229)
6. Explain Thoreau's statement: "Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors, constitutes a majority of one already." (p. 230)
7. How does Thoreau develop his argument to prove that "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison"? (p. 230)
8. What was Thoreau's reaction to being jailed for his refusal to pay his poll-tax? (p. 233) What was his opinion of the jailers?
9. How did Thoreau feel toward the person who paid the tax so that Thoreau could be let out of jail?
10. What kind of authority does Thoreau say he will submit to? (p. 240)
11. When, according to Thoreau, will there be a truly free and enlightened State? (p. 240)
12. What is the tone of this essay?

### Thoreau and the First Person Pronoun:

1. In the second paragraph of the first chapter, Thoreau explains why he uses the first person pronoun and why he writes about his own experiences. What are his reasons? Are there different kinds of reasons? Which kind is the most important? What does he mean by, "Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience"? Does Thoreau imply that the only good books are those written in the first person? Why or why not?

2. Does Emerson suggest why he uses the first person pronoun? If he doesn't, would Thoreau's justifications be applicable to Emerson? Why or why not?

3. a. Emerson and Thoreau both employ the first person singular in their writing; both describe personal experiences. Do you discern any difference between the kinds of experiences the two men record and comment upon?

b. Thoreau's Walden, in some sections, is almost like a naturalist's handbook, filled with detailed descriptions and Latin genus and species names. Are there comparable descriptions in Emerson's essays? Are there descriptions of any kind in Emerson's essays?

c. What does Thoreau do with his descriptions? Examine closely the description of the partridge in "Brute Neighbors." Thoreau says of the young birds: "All intelligence seems reflected in them [their eyes]. They suggest not merely the purity of infancy, but a wisdom clarified by experience. Such an eye was not born when the bird was, but is coeval with the sky it reflects." What leads him to make these remarks? Where did the suggestion of purity and wisdom come from? Can you find other instances in which Thoreau moves from pure description to moral and philosophical observation?

4. It seems that in Thoreau that we have something like this: Thoreau begins with hard fact; he begins by seeing the world through a naturalist's glasses. Then he switches glasses and puts on those of the moralist, the thinker, the philosopher. This movement can be pretty easily followed because of a change in vocabulary. Is there a comparable movement in Emerson? If so, from what to what? Is the change indicated by a change in vocabulary? It might be said that whereas Thoreau moves from the natural to the moral, Emerson moves from the conventional to the original; he looks at the world through conventional lenses and then through original ones. Does this allow him to change his vocabulary as Thoreau does? Why or why not?

### III. Whitman:

In this section, you will find both study questions and commentary. The method employed here will be to work out a solution to a problem that is raised by one of Whitman's short later poems. This problem, which will be described in the first part of this section, should be discussed and re-formulated if necessary.

#### A. "A Noiseless Patient Spider:" A Problem

We will begin our study of Whitman by looking at one of his later poems, "A Noiseless Patient Spider." As you read the poem you will note that it is divided into two parts or sections; the first one focuses on a spider, the second



on the poet's soul. The analogy that the poet draws between the spider and the soul seems strange to me. Seeing a spider usually does not lead one to think of his soul, does it? Other authors, both before and after Whitman, have used the spider in quite different ways. For Swift in the Battle of the Books, the spider represents what Swift considers muddle-headed, thorough-going screwballs, who are void of sense and judgment. David Hume, when discussing the argument that the design of the world proves God's existence, suggested that this same argument might just as well be made to prove that the world was created by a big black spider, perhaps choosing the spider, rather than some other animal, to shock his readers. In a poem entitled "Design," Frost also talks about a spider. Though his is a "dimpled," "fat and white one" which has captured a moth, he is probably thinking of Hume's spider since his poem is about what caused this particular spider to encounter this particular moth. Moreover, in his film Through a Glass Darkly, Ingmar Bergman uses the spider as an emblem for a kind of inverted incarnation; he, too, may have Hume in mind.

Now I brought all this up because Whitman seems to look at the spider in a different way than the artists mentioned above. The glasses he wears must be ground differently than those of Swift, Hume, etc. And, in addition, they are different from the glasses that a naturalist or an entomologist would wear; Whitman, for instance, doesn't tell us what color his spider is, how it is shaped, how many legs it has, etc. His poem would not do as an answer on a biology test. And the glasses Whitman wears are not mine; when I see a spider, even when I am in the most contemplative mood, the last thing I would think of is my soul--at least my soul being like the spider.

The question that we have to ask, then, is how did Whitman find out that his soul is like a spider or who told him that? Now this is really a much more complicated question than it appears; it calls for an investigation of Whitman's poetic creed and his poetic techniques.

#### B. Another Problem and a Partial Solution:

Perhaps we can get some sense of how Whitman's mind works, how he sees things if we look at a famous passage from Song of Myself. Read Section 6 about the grass. Here a child comes to the speaker and asks him "What is the grass"? Whitman responds in a way that must confuse anyone who asks the question. After avoiding the question by saying that he doesn't know what the grass is any more than the child does he suggests at least five things that the grass might be. Here Whitman does not think of just one thing as he does in the poem about the spider; he thinks of several things, or as he says, "guesses," what the grass may be. He doesn't know for sure. What triggers these responses and guesses? How does he get from grass to "disposition," to the Lord, to the child, to democracy, to hair of graves?

Perhaps we can partially answer these questions by looking carefully at the line "Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic." What is a hieroglyphic? Look the word up in the dictionary if you don't know, and then consider the following note that a 17th century poet writes to his reader:

An emblem is not a silent parable. Let not the tender eye  
check to see the allusion of our blessed Saviour figured in these  
types. In Holy Scriptures, He is sometimes called a sower; some-

times a fisher, sometimes a physician. And why not presented so, as well to the eye as to the ear? Before the knowledge of letters, God was known by Hieroglyphics; and, indeed, what are the Heavens, the earth, nay every creature, but hieroglyphics and emblems of His Glory?

(Quarles)

Look carefully at the language this writer uses: figured types, hieroglyphics, emblems, parables. Can you use this kind of language to describe Whitman's poetry? How he sees things? Look at the opening lines of "Spontaneous Me." How do you explain the lines below:

[These are] the real poems (what we call poems being merely pictures,) The poems of the privacy of the night, and men like me...

Whitman evidently sees all of nature as poetry, as a book written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, and that book, he seems to suggest, needs an interpreter, a commentator, an exegete. It needs, as it were, a preacher to make its truths known. But the question we must ask is how does the poet go about interpreting that book? Why does he see what he sees? Why does he make the connections he makes? How does he find out what the hieroglyphics mean? We have seen what he says about the spider and about the grass. Now look at the poem "As I watched the ploughman ploughing." In this poem he talks about analogies. What is analogous to what? What is the hieroglyph to be interpreted? How does he go about interpreting? Perhaps these questions might be used for several of Whitman's poems.

### C. Testing a Hypothesis:

Now it is time to test the hypothesis outlined above.

Read "This Compost." Before asking the questions above, consider the subject with which Whitman is dealing. Can you account for his writing about "distemper'd corpses," the "sour dead," "foul liquid and meat"? Does Whitman see beauty here? If he does, how can he see beauty? Perhaps the following statements from Whitman's writings will help you answer this question:

1. I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.
2. I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuing,
3. The land and the sea, the animals, fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers are not small themes.
4. Divine I am inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer . . .

- (1) What is a fit subject for poetry, according to Whitman? Does he place any restrictions on himself?



- (2) Does he rule out the possibility of any thing being a hieroglyph or emblem?

Now turn back to "This Compost."

1. What is the hieroglyph here? What needs to be interpreted? Is this subject common in poetry? Can you account for Whitman's writing about "dis-temper'd corpses," the "sour dead," "foul liquid and meat"?
2. How does Whitman interpret the hieroglyph? What analogy does he draw?
  - a. How does he move from "Behold this compost" to "The spring grass," the bean," etc?
  - b. What is the chemistry he is talking about?
  - c. What is paradoxical about this chemistry?
  - d. Why is he terrified at the Earth?
  - e. What is the meaning of the last line? What are the "divine materials"? The "leavings from them"?
  - f. What is the implication of this last line for men? What attitude does it suggest toward death? toward nature? toward life?
3. How does the technique of this poem differ from that of "A Noiseless Patient Spider"?

#### D. A Closer Look at the Problem:

Now, we have not yet really answered the question about "The Noiseless Patient Spider" with which we began: How does Whitman find out that his soul is like a spider? We have suggested that Whitman views everything in the world as a hieroglyph, as a poem, as a picture, which is to be interpreted to bring forth its moral or spiritual meaning and we have further suggested that he does this by analogy. But we have yet to account for the peculiar analogies that Whitman draws. It should be clear by now that the analogies Whitman draws are not of the same kind as we talk about in logic. Nor are they those that have occurred in previous writing.

Perhaps a passage from one of Whitman's prose pieces will help us get at his analogical method. He says concerning his Leaves of Grass: "The word I myself put primarily for the description of them as they stand at last, is the word Suggestiveness. I round and finish little, if anything; and could not, consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into an atmosphere of the theme or thought--there to pursue your own flight." (A Backward Glance)

Now, if Whitman intends only to suggest and nothing more, and expects the reader to pursue his own flights, where does Whitman get his suggestions? Perhaps we can get at this by seeing how a boy reacts to a natural situation.

"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"

1. What is the subject of the first sentence in the poem? The verb? In the line beginning "I, chanter of pains . . ." Whitman uses one of his favorite techniques, apposition: "I" = "chanter of pains and joy" = "uniter of here and hereafter." From this line, what can we infer about Whitman's conception of the poet's task?
2. He says he will sing a "re: discence." What is this reminiscence?
3. The poet says that he "translates" like a "curious boy." What does he translate? Why does the poet use this word? Who speaks the next lines (the ones in italics)?
4. How did the poet find out that this is what the birds were singing? Has he been taught bird-language? Notice that a few lines on, the poet says that "He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know." What accounts for this unique knowledge?
5. Why does he refer to the bird as "brother"?
6. Again the boy "translates." What is the theme of the bird's song? The boy refers to the song as an aria. What is an aria? What analogy is Whitman drawing?
7. In the section, "Demon or bird!", the boy seems terribly confused. He can't determine if the bird is singing to its mate or to him: "Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?" Why does he ask this question? Why would the bird be singing to him?
8. What does the sea say to him? How did he find out what the sea is saying? How did the sea get into the poem?
9. Now that you have read the poem with some care consider these questions:
  - a. What are the hieroglyphs to be interpreted in this poem?
  - b. What analogies does the poet make to interpret them?

This poem, perhaps more than any other Whitman poem, shows how the poet moves from the natural object or event to a moral or spiritual level. There is apparently no way in which one can predict what he will read in that object or event; that reading depends on his individual, peculiar sensibility and intuition. The only principle seems to be that since the world is good, it teaches men "good" things. About the Spider poem, then, we can only say that the analogy between the spider and the soul comes out of Whitman's intuitive, individual experience. Emerson says that we know the truth when we see it, and Whitman seems to suggest that he perceives the meaning of the spider-hieroglyph when he sees the spider.

Now look at the subtle poem "Sparkles from the Wheel" and see if you can make out what hieroglyphs and analogies are involved and how the poet goes about interpreting them.

Now that we have looked at a few Whitman poems in order to get at what seems typical of his poetic technique, we will now look at other poems in a more or less chronological progression.

## "Song of Myself"

We have already looked at Section 6 of this poem. Now we will look at the rest of the poem, focusing in on certain sections.

### Section 1:

1. The "I" of the opening lines is socialized: "And what I assume you shall assume." Whitman begins by announcing that he will celebrate his soul; perhaps he uses celebrate here in the same way we do in the phrase, "the priest celebrated mass." Then he gives us a kind of genealogy in the third stanza or part: "Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same." What does this line mean? Can you untangle the grammar? its meaning?
2. What is the subject of the sentence beginning, "Creeds and schools in abeyance. . .?"

### Section 2:

1. In this section, Whitman makes a contrast rather than a comparison; this is a bit unusual for Whitman. What does he contrast? Why does he refuse to let the fragrance" intoxicate him? The fragrance of what?
2. This section employs the catalogue technique for which Whitman is justly famous. Look at the lines beginning "The smoke of my own breath. . .". Now this is an incomplete sentence; there is no verb. What then is the grammatical function of these lines? Since they are composed of nouns and noun phrases they might function as an appositive. Do they? To what? How did you find out?
3. Usually, when an author employs a catalogue, whether in prose or poetry, he suggests an equivalence between the items in that catalog. Does Whitman suggest such an equivalence? In answering this question look at the grammatical structures here. Are any items subordinated to one another? If not, what allows Whitman to equate "The smoke of his own breath" with a "few kisses" or "the song of me rising from bed"?
4. In the last part of this section Whitman employs anaphora, or the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive lines. Why the repetition? Why the use of parallelism?
5. a. Why does he ask:  

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?  
 Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

 b. How do the succeeding lines comment on these questions?

### Section 3:

1. Here Whitman says, in the part beginning "Lack one lacks both . . .," "while they discuss, I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself." How do you account for the egocentricity of one admiring himself? Isn't this the sin of pride?

## Section 4:

1. Later, he says: "But they are not Me myself." What is "not Me myself"? What is "Me myself"?

## Section 5:

1. Whom does he invite to loafe with him in the grass? What is a "valv'd voice"?

## Section 6:

1. How is this section related to Section 5? Or is it?

## Section 7:

1. Why does Whitman say: "Undrape! You are not guilty to me . . ."? Notice that previously Whitman has talked about clothing and nakedness. What is this all about?

## Sections 8-16:

We will not look carefully at all of these sections. We will simply note that Whitman uses the catalogue technique here. What is he cataloguing? What is his attitude toward the kinds of things he catalogues? How are all these things related to what has gone before? Or are they?

## Section 17:

1. What is the referent of "these" in the first line?
2. How did Whitman find out that these thoughts are the "thoughts of all men in all ages and lands"?
3. Why are these thoughts "nothing, or next to nothing" if "they are not yours as much as mine"?
4. To what does the "This" refer in the next line?

## Sections 18-23:

In section 17, the poet has identified himself with all men; this identification has been worked out in the catalogues in stanzas 8-16. Now that this identification has been made, he turns to himself in stanzas 18-23. What does he have to say about himself in these sections? How does he arrive at his identity?

## Section 24:

1. This section describes the identity that he finds. He says he is a "Kosmos." Does he here use the concept of microcosm-macrocosm? or does he find that concept useless? Look at the lines beginning "I speak the pass-word primeval. . ." What does Whitman accept? What does he not accept? What warrant does he have to accept and to reject what he does?



2. How can man be divine? Isn't it a violation of language to describe man as divine?
3. Why is the taunt in the last line described as "mocking"? Where does it come from?

#### Section 25:

1. How does the meaning of "sunrise" change in the first two lines?
2. What is all the talk about talk and words? What is Whitman's attitude toward speech and language? What are their limitations?
3. Do you find in this section any thing reminiscent of Emerson's comments on miracles in the Divinity School Address? What is the meaning of the lines:

I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

#### Sections 26-43:

These sections are characterized by catalogues as were sections 8-16; they are devoted to providing examples of the statement that he carries "the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face."

1. In section 30, he says "All truths wait in all things," "The insignificant is as big to me as any"; and "Logic and sermons never convince." What is Whitman up to here?
2. In section 32, Whitman says he could "turn and live with animals." What does he find attractive about them? Does this imply a degradation of man?
3. In section 41, Whitman refers to Jehovah, the gods of Egyptian and Greek mythology, Buddha and Allah, as well as Odin. What is his attitude toward these religions? Does this passage remind you of anything in Emerson?

#### Section 44:

1. The second and third lines in this section describe Whitman's poetic purpose--to "launch all men and women forward with me into the unknown," after stripping the known away. The balance of this section is devoted to a description of the unknown.
2. Space and time, two categories on which Emerson commented, are discussed in the succeeding lines. Can you infer what Whitman thinks of space and time?
3. What does the line, "I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I am encloser of things to be," mean?

4. Why does Whitman talk about his birth? What does he view as his relationship to the universe? Is it a hostile one?

#### Section 45:

1. Look carefully at the sequence of lines beginning "I open my scuttle at night. . ." Pay particular attention to the last two lines. Why the "wider and wider," "expanding, always expanding"? Does Whitman view the universe as static? As organic and creative?

2. What does Whitman mean when he says, "My rendezvous is appointed. . . What rendezvous?"

#### Section 46:

1. Whitman says he has "the best of time and space." What does he mean here?

2. The poet says he tramps "a perpetual journey." What kind of journey? Might some of the sections we have looked at be considered as travel books? Thoreau said he had travelled much in Concord. Are their journeys or travels the same?

3. What is the significance of the lines:

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it yourself.

Why must one travel it for himself?

#### Section 47:

"The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key. Explain this line. An explanation of what? A key to what? How can a gnat be an explanation or the motion of waves be a key?"

#### Section 48:

1. Look at Whitman's comments on the soul and body and on God. What do they imply about Whitman's view of man, of God, or the universe?

2. This section and the remaining sections function as a kind of conclusion, a kind of peroration. Sections 50-51 are most perplexing but are very important for an understanding of Whitman.

#### Section 50:

Whitman here says that there is something in him that he cannot describe and that he doesn't know what it is; the normal description machinery--dictionaries, utterances, symbols--cannot adequately describe it. And yet he tries. Can you defend someone who writes about the undescribable?

## Section 51:

Consider what Whitman says about contradictions. Emerson said that a contradiction is the hobgoblin of a little mind. Why do both Whitman and Emerson insist on belittling contradictions? What does it imply about their thought processes? Their attitude toward logic?

## Section 52:

Explain the two lines beginning, "I too am not a bit tamed. . ." What is Whitman comparing himself with? Why is he untranslatable?

## "There Was a Child Went Forth"

This poem explores some of the same ideas explored in "Song of Myself" and employs some of the same techniques. Since this poem is relatively short, we will look at it closely, particularly the language and grammatical structures Whitman uses. Read the poem before you begin to work with the questions below.

1. The central figure in this poem is a child. We have already looked at Whitman's use of the child in "Out of the Cradle" and we have read what Emerson has to say about the child. Is this child in this poem a real child, say Whitman when he was a boy, or is the child an emblem of something? Look carefully at the last line of the poem.

These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day."

Does this line suggest something peculiar about this child? Does he ever become a man? How can the child "always go forth every day"? Might the child be an emblem for some faculty or state of man? If so, what specifically?

2. "And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became." The word "became" appears frequently in this poem, and is perhaps the key word in the poem. Let us suppose that the child first sees "the sows pink-faint litter." Does Whitman mean that the child literally becomes a pig? Does he have the Circe incident of the Odyssey in mind? or the Daphne story when he says he became an early lilac? If he does not mean that the child literally becomes an object that he sees, what does he mean? Recall "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." In what sense does the boy in that poem become a bird? What allows him to identify the male bird as "brother"? Is Whitman describing the same process here?

3. The child not only becomes the object, but the object becomes part of him. We have then a two way action. The perceiver and object interpenetrate one another; object and perceiver become one; there is no distinction. What kind of attitude does this imply toward animate and inanimate objects? Are they really regarded by Whitman as objects?

4. In this first section or sentence-stanza, the lines increase in length until the fourth, which is shorter than the third line. And yet the fourth line is notionally expanding--"Or for many years or stretching cycles of years." Is there an inconsistency between form and content at this point? Or does this tension between form and content in some way enhance the poem? Does this same phenomenon occur at other places in the poem? Which form wins out, the longer line and the stretching notion, or the short line and the shrinking notion?

5. Notice the progression in the succeeding lines: Third-month, Fourth-month and Fifth-month. What does this progression imply? Many of the objects mentioned are new-born or just returning life. Why this kind of emphasis?

6. There is a movement from "objects" to "people." Yet there is no formal break in the poem, no grammatical or syntactical feature to signal a shift. What does this imply about Whitman's view of the relation of objects to people? What does the use of parallelism throughout sentence-~~stanzas~~ 3 imply about the objects and people referred to? Take for instance the old drunkard and the school mistress, the friendly boys and the quarrelsome boys. Are there implicit moral judgments passed on them? Is one seen as better than the other? Why or why not?

7. It may be interesting to consider this comment on the poem:

Not only the child changes, but the world also changes; the poem is a depiction not only of the child becoming the world, but the world becoming the child. And this becoming process never ends; it continues; both the world and the child continue to expand.

"As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life."

1. Look at the verbs used in Section I and in Section II: Can you account for the change in tense?

2. Compare these two lines:

As I wended the shores I know (Section I)

As I wend to the shores I know not (Section II)

What is the significance of distinguishing between two kinds of shores?

3. Whitman here talks about pride: "out of the pride of which I utter poems" and "my arrogant poems." Does he find his former poems to be bad because of pride and arrogance? If not, what does he find wrong with them?

4. Is there a hieroglyph in this poem as in "A Noiseless Patient Spider," and in "Out of the Cradle"? If there is, what is it? How does Whitman interpret it. Is there more than one hieroglyph? What is the "fish-shaped island"?

5. Whitman talks about the "real me" as opposed to the "me" in his poems. Is it possible to represent the "real me" in literary forms? Must Whitman ultimately resign himself to failure? Consider this one from the end of the "Song of Myself":

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable.

6. Or does Whitman in this poem come to a solution that will allow him to write about the "real me," to come to new understandings, to move into the unknown? Consider where the poet is situated; he is on the shore, that point at which earth and ocean meet. Is this situation symbolic of something? What do you make of these lines:



I throw myself upon your breast my father (Section III)

Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother (Section IV)

What is the father? What, the mother? What does this make of the poet? What does he seek from both "parents"?

7. Explain: "I gather for myself and for this phantom. . ." Who or what is the phantom?

8. Contrast this poem with "There Was a Child Went Forth." How do the central characters in each poem differ from each other? Contrast the imagery. What difference in attitude does the imagery suggest?

The next poems that we will consider are ones that continue to explore the themes of the inadequacy of Whitman's former poetry and the failure to portray the "real me" in his poetry. Each of these poems seems to suggest that luxuriating in the objects and events of the external world is inadequate for a full, satisfying life. That kind of life must find its nourishment in the love and comradeship of fellow men.

#### "A Glimpse"

The scene is a crowded barroom but "I unremark'd" sat in a corner. Who is the "I" here? Is this the same I as in "Song of Myself," the one that said, "And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you"?

#### "City of Orgies"

What does the poet reject here? What does he seek? What does the word "repay" mean in this poem?

#### "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand"

1. Who is the "me" of this poem? Pay particular attention to the line, "I am not what you supposed, but far different."

2. What kinds of demands does the poet make upon those who would follow him? What is the significance of the word "novitiate"?

3. Who is the I who lies in libraries "as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn or dead"?

4. Explain: "For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not hit, that which I hinted at."

#### "Scented Herbage of My Breast"

1. What is the "scented herbage," the "leaves"?

2. Who are those who will perhaps fail to discover the leaves? Those who will perhaps discover them?
3. The leaves that deal with death picture the speaker as dead and buried with leaves growing out of his heart. Is this metaphor appropriate?
4. Why are these leaves referred to as "emblematic and capricious"?
5. What are the "purports essential"? The "real reality"?

#### "A Hand Mirror"

1. How is this poem related thematically to the poems we have been looking at? or is it?
2. What kind of imagery permeates the poem?
3. Explain what is implied in the use of the words "no more. . .no more. . . / Now." How does this compare with the use of tense in "As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life"?
4. Who is the "you" in the next to the last line? What is the "result" and the "beginning" referred to in the last line?

#### "I Saw in Louisiana A Live-Oak Growing"

1. What is the hieroglyph in this poem? Notice the details used to describe the oak.
2. What analogy does the poet make to interpret the hieroglyph?
3. What is the emblematic significance of the twig? What is "manly love"?
4. At what point does the analogy break down, as far as the poet or speaker is concerned?

#### War Poems:

##### "Bivouac on a Mountain Side"

1. The poet here begins describing a war scene. Notice the use of commas here; how do they affect the rhythm of the poem? Is it the kind of flowing rhythm characteristic of some of the passages in "Song of Myself"? Is there a difference in perspective, in the glasses the poet wears?
2. Is there any hint that the poet makes sense out of this scene? Look carefully at the last line. Can you account for the repetition of "sky" and "far"?
3. How does the last line change the significance of the catalogue of items in the preceding lines? Are the sky and stars emblems of something here? How do you know?

### "The Wound Dresser"

1. What is the situation described here? Who is the old man? What is he asked to do? Can the term "spiritual autobiography" be appropriately used to describe the rest of the poem? Is it significant that the speaker is an old man and not a young man or child?
2. Explain the significance of these words and phrases: "in silence in dreams' projections;" "with hinged knees;" "could not refuse this moment to die for you."
3. What is the "fire, a burning flame" deep in the speaker's breast?
4. How can this experience be both "sweet and sad"?
5. Does the speaker manage to find some way to account for the suffering and hardship he encounters? Or does it remain meaningless?

### "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

#### Section 1:

1. Is there anything peculiar about mourning "with ever-returning spring"?
2. Is the "great star" a symbol for something? Does its early "drooping" account for the poet's mourning? Or does he just feel out of sorts? Is this a cause of melancholy? Who is the "him I love"?
3. What is the "black murk that hides the star"? the "moody, tearful night"? Whose are the "cruel hands"?
4. Section 3 returns to the lilac bush introduced in the first stanza. Notice the description of the lilac's leaves--"heart shaped," "rich green," giving off perfume, miraculous. How does the lilac bush differ from the star? Notice that in section 1, the bush is described as "blooming perennial."
5. Section 4 introduces a new figure--the thrush. The star has been associated with death; the lilac with perennial life. What then is the thrush associated with. It is described as "secluded," "solitary," withdrawn." Are we to take it as a real bird? or is it a hieroglyph? Does the poet draw any analogy? What about "dear brother"?
6. Section 5 introduces yet another element into the poem--the coffin--and section 6 will describe the progress of the coffin. Notice the description of the country through which it travels--"when lately the violets peep'd" "the endless grass," "the yellow spear'd wheat," etc. What time of year is it? Now look at the contrast between the spring imagery and the images such as "gray debris," "from its shroud in the dark-brown fields." What is Whitman talking about? Notice particularly the words "shroud" and "uprisen."

#### Section 6:

This part of the poem is historical; it describes what really happened except perhaps the laying of the sprig of lilac on the coffin. Is this action symbolic?

## Section 7:

This section is a parenthetical statement and parenthesis are usually used as qualifiers of some sort. What does the poet qualify here? Who is the "you" in the first line? What is the force of the "thus"? Do the preceding lines explain why he would chart a song for death? Why is the lilac preferred to the rose and early lily?

## Section 8:

Again, the star. Is its meaning the same as in section 1? Is it still identified with one who has died? Now the star is still a star, but the question is, does the poet interpret its hieroglyphic meaning in a new way? Consider these phrases: "to tell as you bent to me;" "droop'd from the sky. . . as if to my side;" "as we wandered together." What do these phrases suggest about the star? Notice the last two lines in which the star and the speaker's soul both sink. What kind of state is the speaker portraying?

## Section 9:

Again the star, and again the thrush. Can you explain the tension created by the star and the thrush? The star has been identified more or less with Lincoln and his death and then, in section 8, with the poet's grief and mournful attitude. The thrush has been identified as the poet, the singer of the song to death. What then is the significance of turning from the star to the thrush? (What is the psychological effect of writing an elegy?)

## Section 10:

Why does the poet use the words "warble," "song," "chant"? Does the poet identify himself with anything through the use of these words? Has the poet left the star? Had the word "perfume" occurred previously? If so in what connection? Why might it appear here?

## Section 13:

1. In this section, the star, the lilac, and the thrush all appear. The thrush appears first. Is the poet still identified with the thrush as in section 10, or does it function more as a parallel? Do thrush sing "with voice of uttermost woe"? Is the poet drawing an analogy?

2. Again there is a tension between the star and the thrush as in section 9; yet this tension has almost been resolved: "but will soon depart." In addition, there is a tension between the lilac and the thrush, more specifically between the "mastering odor" or the "perfume" and the thrush. Paraphrase these lines to get clear about the nature of their tension.

## Section 14:

1. What is the poet doing here? How is this section related to section 12? Is this section also in some way related to the "mastering odor"?

2. What is the significance of the distinction between the thought of death and the knowledge of it?



3. The latter part of Section 14 pretends to be the carol or song of the bird. Compare the song of the bird in "Out of a Cradle Endlessly Rocking." In that poem we observed that the song of the bird is a hieroglyphic which the boy interprets. Is the same thing occurring here? What do you make of the line: "And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird"? What is the meaning of "tallied"? How does the song of the bird help Whitman reconcile himself to Lincoln's death? Does he move beyond Lincoln's death to a more universal, more general consideration? If so, to what? How can the poet be joyful about death?

#### Section 15:

Who are the comrades with the speaker "There in the night."? Why "swamp-perfume"? Is this the same perfume that he has referred to previously? What are the "long panoramas of vision"? Are they in any way related to what has actually happened? Does the poet make sense out of what he sees? What about the line, "But I saw they were not as was thought"?

#### Section 16:

1. Notice the repetition of the word "passing." What does the poet pass? This word suggests he is going somewhere, but where?

2. What are the "retrievements out of the night"? What night? How can the lilac, star, and bird twine with the soul's chant? This suggests resolution, a resolution of what? How was it arrived at?

#### "Passage to India"

#### Section 1:

1. In this section of the poem Whitman refers to the digging of the Suez Canal, the spanning of the North American continent by the trans-continental railroad, and the laying of the trans-Atlantic cable. These are the "modern wonders," the wonders of the present. So far we are on familiar ground; we expect this kind of thing from Whitman, but the next line is unexpected. Notice the "yet." What does it suggest? What is the "first to sound, and ever sound"?

2. The second stanza or part of this section develops Whitman's view of the past. Pay particular attention to the last two lines. What metaphor does the poet employ here? What view of history is implicit in these lines? How is it similar to or different from Emerson's attitude toward the past?

#### Section 2:

1. This section of the poem centers on fables and myths. How does Whitman's view of myths differ from that of Emerson in "Compensation"? or are their views identical?

2. The third part of this section poses the question of God's purpose. What, according to the poet, is that purpose?

3. What is the "new worship" that the poet sings?

## Section 3:

What are "tableaus"? There are two tableaus; what does he see in each? Is what he sees in any way related to God's purpose as described in Section 2? The third section ends with a parenthetical comment. What is its purpose? Who is the Genoese referred to? How does the shore that he found "verify his dream"?

## Section 4:

How is this section related to Section 3? Is it also related to Section 2? Consider these phrases from Section 2: "far-darting beams of the spirit;" "the unloos'd dreams;" "spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known."

## Section 5:

1. What is the "vast Rondure"? "With inscrutable purpose." What does this phrase modify?
2. How does Whitman describe the progeny of Adam and Eve? Has this theme appeared before? What kinds of questions do men ask? Are they about the "known" or the "unknown"?
3. Who is the "true son of God"? Why the qualifier "true"? What is the implicit comment on Jesus? Is this comment like or different from Emerson's comment on Jesus in "The Divinity School Address"? What kind of role does Whitman see the "true son of God" carrying out?

## Section 6:

1. What relation do the events of the present (referred to in Stanza 1) have to the role of the "true Son of God"?
2. What is the relation of the past to these events? Are there any implicit or explicit comments on the future?

## Section 7:

How is this section related to the previous section? How has the idea of travel changed? Have we previously encountered this idea of travel in Emerson? in Thoreau? in Whitman's earlier poems?

## Section 8:

Why the "too" in the second line? To whom is the poet comparing "we"? What are the "trackless seas"? First the poet says that "we dare not dally" with the "mystery of God"; a few lines later, he is beseeching God to "bathe me O God in thee." Is there a contradiction here? Then, after spending a good deal of time talking about the "transcendent / Nameless, the fibre and the breath," he asks "How should I think. . .if. . .I could not launch, to those, superior universes." Why then does he "shrivel at the thought of God"? In the last few lines of this section, there are references to the "Elder Brother" and the "Younger". To what is Whitman alluding? Does he change the point of the original story?

## Section 9:

Comment on the first line. Why "to more than India"? To what is the soul going to pass? What is the end of this journey or voyage?

### The Idea of Travel

When an author writes a work of fiction in which he wishes to portray a change of attitudes or a moral, intellectual, or spiritual development in his hero, he often sends his hero on a journey, e.g., Ulysses, the Red Cross Knight, Christian in Pilgrim's Progress. The same idea is used in spiritual autobiography; in this genre, the idea of travel, used in metaphorical fashion, often provides a structure for describing change and development, as, for example, in The Divine Comedy. Therefore, we might expect the authors we have been dealing with to employ the idea of travel if they are, as we have suggested, writing spiritual autobiography.

We will begin our discussion of the idea of travel in the transcendentalists by looking at what Emerson has to say about travel in "Self-Reliance," pp. 186-187. In this passage, Emerson disparages travel as it is ordinarily conceived; he objects to the idea, prevalent from at least the sixteenth century to Emerson's time, that one should travel to foreign countries in order to become "cultured," to learn from others. Emerson's insistence on self-hood, on the integrity of the individual disallows such an attitude; in these passages, he speaks in favor of parochialism, alluding to the parochially-oriented men of England, Italy, and Greece, who are now highly regarded in Western Civilization. Emerson's conception of how one knows requires that man look into himself rather than at the external world. Emerson then inverts the usual travel metaphor. Travelling is not the way to knowledge, whether it be geographical, literal travel, or metaphorical travelling. Consider these sentences from "Self-Reliance (p. 181):

Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men.

Thus, if man is to travel, it must be on the "internal ocean," and that travelling must be by one's self: "We must go alone." If the travel metaphor is appropriate for Emerson, then it must be travel into one's self: "Let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause." Emerson, then, if he uses the travel metaphor, uses it to signify retirement, withdrawal from the world.

While the idea of travel, in any form, is not prominent in Emerson, it is moreso in Thoreau, although here too, we have a kind of inversion; withdrawal and retirement are the key to Thoreau's thought. In your consideration of the idea of travel in Walden, you might wish to begin with Thoreau's statement, "I have travelled far in Concord," and then you might wish to explore this idea by comparing and contrasting The Odyssey which you read in the 9th grade with Walden. You might ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are the purposes that lie behind Odysseus' journey and Thoreau's retirement alike? To what extent? How do they differ?

2. In The Odyssey, the hero encounters fabulous creatures such as the cyclops, the Sirens, etc. Thoreau encounters only real and natural creatures. What does Ulysses learn in his encounters with fabulous creatures? Do the natural creatures teach Thoreau anything? The same thing that Ulysses learns?
3. Look carefully at the opening paragraphs in the chapter entitled "Conclusion." What is Thoreau's attitude toward travel? How is it like or unlike Emerson's attitude? Let us assume that The Odyssey is a work designed to display how a good ruler is made, how he develops fortitude, prudence, a sense of justice. Is this what Walden displays? Is its purpose to show how society is to be ordered? If not, what is its purpose? If you discover a difference in purpose, does it explain why Thoreau retires and Odysseus does not?

Many of Whitman's poems and sections of most of them are informed by the idea of travel. Several sections in "Song of Myself," "Passage to India," and "A Child Went Forth,"--all these and many of his other poems use the travel metaphor. In the 8th grade you read one or more novels in which the journey was the structural principle--novels like Lazarillo, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Pickwick, Sword in the Stone.

Consider the similarities between Lazarillo and "There Was a Child Went Forth." In both works, a young child "travels" in the world; both learn or change somewhat.

1. How do the central characters in these two works differ? Are they alike in the same way?
2. What does each learn? Do they learn the same thing?
3. Do they regard natural objects in the same way? Do you recall Lazarillo commenting on natural objects?
4. Upon breaking into the chest in which the priest keeps his bread, Lazarillo says, "and I beheld the face of God." Does Whitman's child see God in anything?
5. Compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the child's and Lazarillo's attitudes and reactions to the people each meets. How do they differ? Are the differences due to the author's particular view of things and his purposes?
6. If you have read the Sword in the Stone you will recall that Wart becomes a fish, a bird, an ant, a badger, a goose, etc. How does Wart's becoming these things differ from Whitman's child becoming those objects he looks upon? What is the purpose that lies behind having Wart become something? Whitman's purpose? Compare the journeys of Mr. Pickwick and Whitman in "Song of Myself." Do they learn the same things from their travels?



## Nature in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman

1. Below you will find a passage written by Howard E. Evans, who is curator of insects at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard. He is writing about cockroaches.

Doubtless the learning abilities of roaches have something to do with their success in putting up with the shenanigans of mankind. Other reasons for their success are to be found in their ability to scuttle off rapidly into crevices where they remain remarkable alert to peril. . ."

[Mr. Evans here describes the nervous system of the cockroach and how the cockroach senses danger and is stimulated to find protection for itself. He then makes some comments about what man can learn from their behavior.]

Our own human warning systems operate on much the same principle; emphasis is on rapid transmission of simple messages ("missile approaching") rather than much slower transmission of analytical reports. Such a system may have insured the survival of roaches as a group for millions of years, because their response is quick escape and, if the source of stimulation is in fact harmless, nothing is lost. Our problem, since we have no place to escape to, is to avoid an inappropriate response to meaningless information.

Harper's Magazine, December, 1966  
Vol. 233, p. 52.

Now suppose that you were Thoreau, or Whitman, and that you have observed a cockroach. Would you be likely to draw the same analogy between the cockroach and man as Mr. Evans does? If not, what analogy would you draw? Write a passage or poem in which you treat the cockroach as Thoreau or Whitman would. Then write a short essay in which you describe the differences between the "picture of nature" implicit in Mr. Evan's description and in your version.

2. Writing about earthworms, Alan Devoe describes the life of the earthworm and then notes that Charles Darwin found that the presence and activity of earthworms in the soil areates it, makes it porous and arable. He then writes:

It is good sometimes to be reminded that the ephemeral shifts of politics and ideologies are not the things on which our human welfare actually depends. The ultimate welfare of our tribe depends on things like worms.

Suppose that you were Emerson and read these sentences. Would you agree or disagree with Mr. Devoe's statements? Write a short essay in which you suggest how Mr. Devoe's picture of nature is like or different from Emerson's.

# I. Transition to Dickinson: General Treatment of Techniques and Ideas.

Emily Dickinson is a very different kind of poet than Walt Whitman, and the works show few similarities of thought or technique. A comparison of two of the poems of like theme may help you to see many of their dissimilarities. The distinguishing qualities of Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" (#59) are an objective, realistic manner; ellipsis and concentration; striking, unusual imagery and metaphor; and a traditional, though somewhat modified verse form. Whitman's "Darest Thou Now O Soul" (p. 364) is transcendental and romantic in thought and tone; repetitive and expansive; less frequently striking or unusual imagery and metaphor; and non-traditional in verse form. Both poems concern a topic of great interest to the poets.

A striking, unusual metaphor begins in the opening two lines of Dickinson's poem:

Because I could not stop for Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;

The first line uses "stop" in an unusual way: it suggests that the poet is too busy to die. In the second line, "stopped" equates Death to a caller stopping to pick up a friend. "Kindly" elaborates this metaphor. When used in conjunction with the special sense of "stopped," it suggests cordiality and gentility--probably the kind of gentility that characterized the poet's New England society. The word "carriage," in the third line, reinforces this suggestion, for this word is especially used to indicate "a vehicle built for elegance and comfort" (according to the ACD), the kind of vehicle a New England gentleman might use to call on a lady friend.

The word "kindly" carries other suggestions as well. Especially for readers familiar with English literature of the Renaissance and earlier, "kindly" suggests "naturalness," perhaps the natural inevitability of death. On a more obvious level it simply suggests that death is not unkind. The multivalence of this word offers an example of the concentration of Dickinson's poetry--the concentration that results, in many of her poems, from using all the suggestive power a word may carry. Thus, the opening lines engage the reader with an unusual metaphor: death as a social caller; they also suggest that death is both natural and kind through the effective use of a single word.

The third and fourth lines continue the metaphor of the genteel visitor and introduce another. "The carriage held but just ourselves" introduces the metaphor of a ride in the carriage. On one level of reading, this is a ride with the gentleman caller. But, because Death is the caller and Immortality the chaperon, the ride becomes the one from deathbed to grave; the carriage becomes a hearse. Both of these metaphors describe death, in Dickinson's concentrated, suggestive manner, as a journey, or a change of state spoken of as a journey. Having been used by Homer, the journey metaphor is one of the oldest in Western literature. Often representing the development of an individual into maturity, it becomes, in Dickinson's hands, a metaphor which represents the passage from life to death.

The first stanza is in the traditional ballad stanza (which Emily used for most of her poetry): quatrains with alternating 4- and 3-meter iambic lines; Emily probably learned this stanza form from the religious hymn books of her time. The lines, of course, are very short and characterized by short vowels and hard, stop

consonants (d's, p's, t's). This combination of short sounds, short words, and short lines results in a lightness and quickness of rhythm appropriate to the idea of death's kindness which the word "kindly" and the metaphor of the gentleman caller have already suggested. This technique of reinforcing action and meaning through appropriate sounds and rhythms is carried on throughout the poem and can be seen in other Dickinson poems. The normal ballad rhyme scheme, abcb, is used as well, and the b rhymes are direct, whereas in most of her poems--and elsewhere in this poem--Emily used the so-called "slant" or "off-rhyme" (e.g. "away" and "civility," "ring" and "sun," "day" and "eternity"). This absence of slant rhyme allows no discord effect that might reduce the kindness and lightness of the first stanza. Watch how the slant rhyme affects the tone of the stanzas in which it occurs.

In the second stanza, the carriage begins to move: "We slowly drove, he knew no haste . . . " The slowness of the drive is emphasized by repetition--an unusual device for Dickinson. It is reinforced by the diction, now characterized by softer (fricative) consonants and long vowels and diphthongs. This leisurely movement continues the metaphors of the gentleman caller, who is taking his lady for a drive, and of the ride to the grave--the funeral procession. It also comments upon death itself by adding to the restrained, relatively unemotional tone of the entire poem, another general characteristic of Dickinson's poetry.

In the next lines, the poet puts away her "labor," and her "leisure too" for Death's "civility." "Civility" again reinforces the metaphor of Death as a gentleman caller. Furthermore, it adds restraint to the poem by connoting the polite distance between a "gentleman" and his "lady." It is important that both leisure and labor are put away. If one were to take away all the labor and leisure from his life, what would be left? Without either, there can be no life. Thus, death is described, at this point, by the metaphors of a comfortable, restrained social situation. That it lacks labor and leisure shows it to be a non-living state.

The third stanza concentrates on things the carriage passes in its journey. First it passes children who "strove" in "the ring." This striving affords a contrast to the non-living state of the poet and makes her seem "more dead." Next she passes "gazing grain." The personification of grain seems to give it more life and therefore effects a greater contrast with the state of the dead poet. When the carriage passes the "setting sun," the journey becomes more mystical and unearthly than a simple ride or funeral procession. The ride represents the change from life to death. The traditional imagery of children, grain, and setting sun, which represent phases of human life ending in death, reinforces the journey metaphor.

The opening line of the fourth stanza returns the reader to earth--and to his journey to the grave--with a sharp note of typically "Dickinsonian" realism. This realism strengthens the emotionless objectivity, the restrained tone, of the entire poem. Objectivity and restraint add to the illusion that the poet is describing death through experiencing it herself.

The fourth stanza also holds a characteristically surprising image: "The dewes grew quivering and chill." As with the "gazing grain," this image comes alive because it is unusual to ascribe human reactions to dew. The chill is also useful--it reinforces the feeling of lifelessness being described.



The fifth stanza demonstrates something readers must always be aware of while reading Dickinson: she seldom says what she means directly. Her journey ends at a "house" that seems like a "swelling" which has its "cornice in the ground." She is talking about her grave, but she carefully omits that word. This ulteriority is a central device for Dickinson. Her readers must work to find out what she is saying.

Now that the poet has reached the end of her journey, she might be expected to describe death more directly. She remains, however, typically suggestive:

Since then 'tis centuries, and yet  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity.

The poet has lain in her grave for centuries and is only aware that time has passed. Nothing has happened to her--the time seems shorter than her last day of life. "Non-existence," therefore, may be what the poet is attempting to describe. The whole poem has been characterized by lack of emotion and by objectivity. Its very metaphors have been restrained and decorous. This emotionlessness, plus lack of labor and leisure and the centuries of dream-like repose, as nearly evoke a state of non-existence or nothingness as any description, because it is not nothing, possibly can. According to this poem, death is a state of non-existence, or at most, a dream-like repose such as one occasionally experiences when half-asleep, a vague feeling that time is passing. What is important here is that Dickinson has no romantic preconceptions about death derived through transcendental intuition.

The title of Whitman's poem, "Darest Thou Now O Soul," on the other hand, hints that his poem is neither objective nor unemotional--as you might expect from Whitman. First, the poet somehow divides "himself" from his "soul." Such a division, even if it is only made for rhetorical purposes, would be unusual for a poet who, like Dickinson, describes death as objectively as a psychologist might record his own or a subject's sensations.

Whitman is not objective. He is of the romantic school; he trusts his intuition. Moreover, the title itself argues an emotional involvement not present in Dickinson's poem; this too suggests that Whitman is not of an objective turn of mind.

Whitman uses his untraditional, organic verse form which is, by now, familiar to you. Here his verse form reinforces his meaning--a device Dickinson's traditional stanza cannot easily be made to do. Whitman describes death as a "walking out" comparable to the journey metaphor in Dickinson. The verse quite literally "walks out" with the meaning to meet death, for each successive line in each stanza is longer than the one before it.

Since Whitman's verse is organic and not traditional in form, he can make the second stanza very appropriately grow out of the first. It describes death in the same way as the final line of the first stanza does. Thus Whitman is using his normal device of expansion to elaborate his meaning--something Dickinson would be unlikely to do. Here the poet explains what he foresees in death. It is a state (metaphorically a place) where no physical human elements are found: no "face of blooming flesh, no lips, nor eyes, are in that land." Death is a place of spirit,



not of matter. The broken lines of this stanza evoke a sense of hesitancy which reiterates the daring nature of the death experience, and thus increases the emotion of the poem.

The third stanza describes more explicitly the poet's knowledge of death. It is "undream'd of," "blank," "inaccessible." Once more the lines are broken, hesitant, fearful.

In the fourth stanza, "the ties loosen" at the moment of death and the "inaccessible land" becomes accessible. The ties that are loosened are the senses and physical forces. Only Time and Space remain, just as they seem to remain for Dickinson. Death for Walt Whitman means a freedom from the restrictions man's physical self--his body--imposes on him.

This view is elaborated in the final stanza. The ties are broken and the poet experiences death. He "bursts forth," an image that suggests freedom gained by breaking through an obstruction. He "floats," an image that pictures death as an oceanic state--Whitman's transcendental view of death as immersion in the Oversoul. He floats in Time and Space, having been prepared for this by the breaking of all physical ties. The poet now enjoys the "fruit of all," the goal of life: merger with the Oversoul. Thus, Whitman experiences in death a joyful consummation very unlike the passive, dream-like death of Dickinson's poem.

It should also be noted that Whitman is much like Dickinson here in his suggestive method. He gives his view of death more metaphorically than directly. Nevertheless, it is essential to note how much less concentrated and more repetitive Whitman's poem is.

From this discussion, you will have found out something about the methods and the ideas of Dickinson. It will be useful to your understanding to think about Dickinson in relation to the other authors you have read in this unit--especially to Whitman. See if you can find similarities and differences in their views on important subjects.

## II. Study Guide

The study guide will be in the form of notes that a reader of the poems made as he read them. Sometimes he comments on them; at other times he writes questions for himself. As you read these notes you may find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with our notemaker; you may find his remarks wrong or irrelevant or relevant in a way different than he takes it. Or you may find his comments enlightening or confusing. They should at least form a basis for your discussion of the poems. You too might make notes as you read and discuss.

### Notemaker's Introduction:

In the following notes you will notice that I have grouped the poems by topic. Some of Emily's poems seem to deal with similar subjects. It might not be the best arrangement but I found that some of Emily's poems illuminate or qualify--and even contradict!--each other.

And you will find that I tend to make notes or questions on three aspects of the poems. One might say there are three problems that come up time and again:

Problem I: Words--Emily seems addicted to using unfamiliar and strange words; and sometimes she uses familiar words in strange ways. I had to keep a dictionary handy and to look carefully at how the words are used.

Problem II: Themes and Ideas: Emily likes to make paradoxes; to set up contradictions and sometimes to do the impossible--like record the thoughts of a dead person. And sometimes she seems unsure of herself--what she believes, what things mean.

Problem III: Syntax--Emily writes short lines and therefore often plays with grammar and syntax. She often leaves out words or even phrases or puts words together in strange ways. I found it helpful in reading her poems to rewrite them--filling in the missing words or phrases or straightening out the word order. Then I could see the effect she achieved by elliding words and phrases or using unfamiliar word order. You might wish to do the same; it is a preliminary step to understanding Dickinson. You might discover as I did that when you write out the poems in this way unnoticed ambiguities appear or apparent ambiguities disappear.

#### 1. Dickinson and Transcendentalism: Religious Thought.

(Some of the important poems on this topic are not found in the Laurel edition and are reproduced below.)

"Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church"

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church--  
I keep it, staying at Home--  
With a Bobolink for a Chorister--  
And an Orchard, for a Dome--

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice--  
I just wear my wings--  
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
Our little Sexton--sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman--  
And the sermon is never long,  
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last--  
I'm going, all along.

(Quoted from Thomas H. Johnson, ed.,  
Emily Dickinson's Poems, Boston: Little,  
Brown, and Company, 1961.)

The first two lines surprise me. Emily was a Congregationalist. Did they think it was okay to stay home from church on Sunday? Emily seems to. She claims to find worship in and through nature more effectual than in church. She is a transcendentalist like Emerson (cf. the Divinity School Address); or is she? Bobolink = choir; orchard = dome; God = clergyman. "God preaches, a noted Clergyman--/ And the sermon is never long." Would Emerson have said anything like this? Whitman?

Emily apparently loves dashes. Why doesn't she use commas and periods? And in the second stanza, she seems to get really mixed up in the fourth line. I think Emily needs a good course in grammar. Or does she? Substitute a period or comma in every case. What difference would it make?

Emily is a bit presumptuous when she claims to wear wings. God--a clergyman? In what way?

Those last two lines! How can the poet conclude that? Because the sermons are short?

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"I like a look of Agony"

I like a look of Agony,  
Because I know it's true--  
Men do not sham Convulsion,  
Nor simulate, a Throe--

The Eyes glaze once--and that is Death--  
Impossible to feign  
The Beads upon the Forehead  
By homely Anguish strung.

The last poem suggested that Emily has something in common with the transcendentalists. Here we see a different side of her. The suffering of Christ is of central importance to traditional Christian faith. Calvinists (of whom the Congregationalists of New England were a strain) were greatly concerned with suffering, sin, and evil. This poem dwells on "agony," "anguish," and "death." Could this be the poet's Calvinism coming out? Is she concerned about pain in other poems? Did Emerson or Whitman even dwell on the pain of existence? Could Emily have felt differently at different times and so represent a kind of mixture of Calvinist and Transcendent views? What about someone who likes a look of agony?

What biblical allusion is suggested in the "Beads upon the Forehead" line? What is "impossible to feign"? What is the "that" in "that is Death"? or is it "and, i.e., Death"? Who strings beads on foreheads? Homely Anguish? Ugly? Plain? How does anguish look? Can it be handsome?

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Poem # 27: "What soft, cherubic creatures"

Here is another poem that deals with the poet's ideas on religion--a witty attack on prissy New England gentlewomen. The lines "Of freckled human nature,/ Of Deity ashamed,--" seem to say something about both human nature and the nature of the Deity. Have I read something like this before? Was it in Whitman? Is this a characteristic statement for a Calvinist? A Transcendentalist? I could separate out the similarities and differences.

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## 2. Nature and the Limits of Knowledge

"The Grass so Little has to Do"

The Grass so little has to do--  
A Sphere of simple Green--  
With only Butterflies to brood  
And Bees to entertain--

And stir all day to pretty Tunes  
The Breezes fetch along--  
And hold the Sunshine in its lap  
And bow to everything--

And thread the Dews, all night, like Pearls--  
And make itself so fine  
A Duchess were to common  
For such a noticing--

And even when it dies--to pass  
In Odors so divine--  
Like Lowly spices, lain to sleep--  
Or Spikenards, perishing--

And then, in Sovereign Barns to dwell--  
And dream the Days away,  
The Grass so little has to do  
I wish I were a Hay--

A dashy poem this!

I would write! "The grass has so little to do."

This poem seems to talk about nature in general. Many 19th Century poets wrote about nature; they saw it usually as a source of divine analogy, the garment of spiritual reality, or an escape from the evils of civilization. Does Dickinson take any of these traditional approaches to nature? Might this poem be entitled "Leaves of Grass Revisited"?

Why should the grass have anything to do? What does the poet suggest by judging the grass by human standards this way? No object of nature has anything to do--in the human sense. I think the poet is naive. How does the diction of the poem add to its naive tone? What does the poet gain by slipping in words like "Spikenards" and "Sovereign"?

Dickinson is hard for me because she doesn't always use familiar words in their most common sense. How is grass a "sphere"? What is a "spikenard"? How about "Sovereign Barns"? A barn is a barn; has no regality.

The grass is personified throughout the poem. In the third stanza it is compared to a Duchess. Would Whitman have made such a comparison? He used grass as a symbol of democracy and immortality. By observing his "spear of summer grass" he became aware of a close kinship with nature. Does Dickinson find this? Is the grass different? Or do they wear different pairs of glasses?



The last line of the poem is peculiar. The "a Hay" and the subjunctive "were" give it a kind of wistful tone. Does this suggest that the poet--or anyone, for that matter--is really in kinship with nature as Whitman thinks? Can man understand nature and perceive its true meaning, according to Dickinson? How did she find out the answer? Or did she?

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Poem # 43: "To hear an oriole sing"

In the last poem, Dickinson treated nature quite differently than Whitman would. In this poem, she is again concerned with nature. The oriole can, like the grass, stand for all nature--can't it?

What is she up to in the first stanza? What would make the oriole's song common or divine? "only divine"? Why not "only common"? Second stanza: "it"--no referent; or is there? "Fashion of the ear": What does it do? What's "dun"? "rune"? Where, according to the last line, is the true meaning of nature, in the object or in the observer? In neither? In both? Does the last line leave any possibility of a Whitman-like merger of man, nature, and God?

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Poem # 72: "Split the lark and you'll find the music"

This poem has almost the same theme as the last one. But here the song is in the lark! This poem was written in 1864, the other in 1862. Emily is apparently unsure of herself. First, man creates the meaning in nature; now it is in the object. Or is it either? Maybe both. I may be oversimplifying.

"Scarlet experiment! sceptic Thomas"--who is Thomas?

"Your bird is true"--that phrase bothers me.

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"A little Madness in the Spring"

A little Madness in the Spring  
Is wholesome even for the King,  
But God be with the Clown--  
Who ponders this tremendous scene--  
This whole Experiment of Green--  
As if it were his own!

This poem seems to be related to the lark and oriole poems. The springtime madness could refer to the poet's belief that he (or she) can perceive nature's real meaning or find in its symbolism some meaning for man. "Tremendous scene" and "whole experiment of green"? A clown can't understand great things. What does the poet mean by "as if it were his own"? Clown = Whitman? The final line may make use of the scientific connotations of the word "experiment"? Clown = scientist who thinks nature is a gigantic experiment which he had only to analyze in order to understand its essential truths. Does Emily agree? Would scientists agree today?

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Poem # 154: "How happy is the little stone"

This poem concerns inanimate nature as the other's I've read concerned animate nature. The poet seems to be listing reasons for the stone's happiness. What is the stone contrasted against when the poet talks of "careers" and "exigencies"? What does the "coat of elemental brown" have to do with the stone's happiness? These lines are ambiguous: did the universe put the coat on the stone or was it vice-versa? The stone's happiness seems to stem ultimately from its "casual", fulfillment of "absolute decree." What is this "decree"?

Will nature yield its meaning to transcendental intuition?

### 3. The "Self" and Nature

Poem # 146: "A route of evanescence"

This is a strange poem. When something is evanescent it's disappearing. What does the poet mean by talking about a "route of evanescence"? Must be something moving fast--that would be like a route of evanescence. The second line suggests motion too. Emerald is a green color--but resonance is a property of sound--do colors have resonance? Cochineal is another color--here it's "rushing." Emily seems to be describing something using a familiar trick which poets (or English teachers) call synaesthesia. Whatever the thing is, it's green and bright red, moves fast, and part of it looks like a revolving wheel. According to the next lines, this thing was rushing around in a flower bush. Now that makes some sense!

I know from experience that Emily won't stop with just describing a natural thing but will have to say something about it. She does this in the last two lines--she's comparing the natural thing to "the mail from Tunis." That doesn't make much sense to me. Tunis is very far away; anything bringing mail from there in "an easy morning's ride" must be fast. No jets in Emily's day! But a good comparison to the natural thing she's talking about. Nothing in the human world could have been so fast--could she be repeating here a theme she's used before?

I wonder about her description. She describes the object so we see it, yet we don't. It's a "route of evanescence." I wonder if Emily intended the particular thing she described to suggest something else about nature in general?

Poem # 6: "These are the days when birds come back"

The first three stanzas are clearly about Indian Summer. "Sophistries" are plausible but fallacious arguments sometimes intended to deceive people. Does "June" argue? What about? Could this be a slightly unusual use of the word? Another syntactic ambiguity: Is the "Blue and gold mistake" the June-like appearance of Indian Summer, or is it also the "sophistries of June"? What do these "sophistries" and the "blue and gold mistake" almost induce the poet to believe? Maybe they just make her think that it is June. If that's all the poem means, why all the religious terms of the next stanzas ("witness bear," "altered," "sacrament," "last communion," etc.)? Seeds bear witness to the end of summer and

usually to the death of the plant that bore them. But seeds also hold the promise of new life. Let's see. The "blue and gold mistake" almost makes the poet believe in the old "sophistries of June," until the seeds "bear witness" and a dead leaf flies through the air. This tells me it's not really June. Of course.

"Sacrament of summer days"? Sacraments are visible signs to confer grace or divine life on people who receive them. In the last stanzas, Indian Summer is described in terms of a "last communion" of traditional Christian religion. An appropriate metaphor! "In the haze": more than the hazy atmosphere characteristic of that time of year. What?

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Poem # 157: "As imperceptibly as grief"

Another poem about the passing of summer. Summer's passing like grief which passes by barely perceptible stages. Because it's imperceptible, the passing doesn't seem like "perfidy." Summer's passing is the passing of youth into age or of life into death. What made me think of that? A "distilled quietness"? Distilled from what? What is the poet trying to do when she talks about "Nature spending with herself/ Sequestered afternoon"? This metaphor catches the feeling of summer's passing, but how? "Spending with herself"?

The poet speaks of summer as "guest who would be gone." And in the last line, summer passes at last. What is the "beautiful" that it escaped to? Seasons = man's life? "beautiful" = what?

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Poem # 93: "Farther in summer than the birds"

This is one of the few poems Emily gave a title to, and I'm glad she did, because it's a hard one! The title is "My Cricket." What analogy does the poet suggest by referring to crickets as a "minor nation"? Should I draw parallels between the lives of men and crickets? The "minor nation" is "farther in summer than the birds." That may mean the birds have already left for winter. But it's only August. Birds don't leave New England in August. Well, could summer stand for something else--a phase in the life of a cricket, or a poet? My grandparents used to say that winter was only six weeks away when the crickets start chirping. What's winter to a cricket? Do birds die in winter? Do crickets? How is the cricket "farther in summer than the birds"?

Masses celebrate something; or do priests celebrate mass? Crickets-- mass-- late summer? Mass--no ordinance--grace.

What's the connection? The third line of the second stanza--"it"? "Becomes"? It (the mass) becomes (in the sense of being appropriate to) a pensive (thoughtful) custom in the poet and therefore "enlarges loneliness"; pensive customs are usually lonely, and the sound itself is lonely too. But it may go like this-- it becomes (turns into) a pensive custom because the grace the mass seeks is so slow in coming (gradual) that the crickets sing on until the singing is customary. Could it be both?

An "antiquiest"? "Gratify repose"?

The first line of the last stanza means that none of the grace the mass is asking for has been granted yet. What kind of "furrow"? What "glow"? What do the last two lines suggest about the effect the mass has had?

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#### 4. Immortality

Poem # 110: "Immortal is an ample word"

They say that Emily loved paradoxes. This poem seems to demonstrate that. "Immortality is an ample word": Ample for what? What are "what we need"? What does the "it" in the third line refer to? the "'Tis"?

"We fundamental know": merely a grammatical blunder. Bad poetry, I say. Maybe she's talking about heaven. Does Emily need heaven? I think I'll write some notes sometime about Emily's belief in immortality. I will try to decide if she is a typical Christian, a Transcendentalist, a skeptic. She may not be any of these!

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Poem # 119:

Paradox again! Heaven--a place where the injuries of life are healed. Where have I heard that? Earthly injuries healed after death? I've heard people say so. Does Emily agree? How did she find out that "medicine posthumous/ Is unavailable"?

I haven't heard heaven called an exchequer before. Or have I? People do talk about "owing" things to heaven. What do the last two lines imply? I'm not sure. Negotiation--takes at least two people. Emily won't negotiate--won't negotiate with whom? about what?

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Poem # 10: "Safe in their alabaster chambers"

The last two poems suggested that Emily was rather uncertain about the idea of human immortality--or, at least, of the conventional views about it. This poem also concerns immortality, but its meaning doesn't seem very clear to me.

Who are the "meek members of the resurrection"? First of all, maybe I should be sure about what a resurrection is! If it's a rebirth, the Christian idea of rising from the dead, I would expect the "members of the resurrection" to be risen--"I believe . . . in the resurrection of the body." But they're asleep in their "alabaster chambers." Is "alabaster" a material or a color? Where could I find an "alabaster chamber" that's untouched by the light of day ("morning" and "noon"), "raftered" with satin, and "roofed" with stone? A resurrected Christian wouldn't lie asleep in a tomb, "members of the resurrection"--an ironical phrase?



Whose "stolid ears"? It couldn't be the "members" of the resurrection," because the second stanza is out in the sun--outside the "alabaster chambers." This whole stanza is a kind of contrast to the first. Shows that nature lives on in stolidity because of the death of the sagacious human being. This stanza sounds much more mechanical than the first.

The first stanza concentrated on the grave; the second on life about and without the grave. The third stanza seems to move away from the earth. It talks of "crescents" of years, "worlds" scooping "arcs," "firmaments" rowing--all astronomical images. Then the talk turns to "Diadems" and "Doges." What are they? Are they found in space? Of course not! These are princes on earth. These great men fall "soundless as dots". The "disc of snow" comes at the end of a stanza full of astronomical images. This suggests what the "disc" might be or does it? The great men of earth fall like "soundless dots" on a "disc of snow"--what kind of after-life is this? Is this image related in any way to Emerson's or Whitman's view of the afterlife? The last stanza suggests that man's affairs or his fate really don't make any difference in the world of nature or in the new worlds of space that science was (and is) eagerly discovering. What? Is there any hint of the traditional Christian resurrection in this poem? Look again at the rhythm of the second and third stanzas. They sound so mechanical. Contributes to the meaning of the poem. How?

## 5. Death:

(For one of Emily's death poems, look again at the opening essay of the Dickinson section.)

Poem # 36: "I heard a fly buzz when I died"

This poem is about the moment of death, written, imaginatively I'm sure, in the writer's own person. It's strange, though, that she should mention something as trivial as a fly's buzzing at such a time--and in the first line too! The rest of the first stanza merely describes the stillness of the death room.

Whose eyes "had rung them dry" in the second stanza? Whose "breaths were gathering sure"? I've heard that people took great interest in the moment of death back in Dickinson's time. They hoped the victim would give some kind of hint about what's on the "other side." Here there seems to be a number of people waiting, with the poet, for the creator to come for his faithful servant.

If the moment of death was of such great significance, doesn't it seem funny that the poet (or whoever is dying) should spend her last moments of waiting for the Creator by giving away "keepsakes"?

Then comes the "blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz" of the fly. Could be some significance in the position of the fly--"Between the light and me". This "light" suggests more than just sunlight or lamplight.

The poet dies at the same time the fly interposes. What view of death does this suggest? Is this the "King" they were waiting for? What does a fly have to do, on the level of everyday experience, with death?

Poem # 4: "One dignity delays for all"

This poem is essentially a single metaphor. Mitre, purple, crown, coach, footmen, etc. all suggest the pomp of a royal or ecclesiastical court. They describe the dignified funeral most of us will have, no matter how meek and simple we might be. There is a rather abrupt change of tone in the last three lines; how is it done? What does "meek escutcheon" suggest? I wonder what Emily's purpose was in writing this poem. Was she trying to say something about death itself? About society?

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## 6. Love and the Mystical Lover

Poem # 17: "The Soul selects her own society"

The central idea of this poem seems fairly clear to me. Emily is repeating the old idea that love is eternal. Real love doesn't change its mind.

But Emily can be tricky. I know that she seems to have had a lover whom she alludes to in many poems. The lover doesn't have to be a man? Could be some relation between "divine majority" and the "one" of the third stanza. But how can "divine majority" be "one"?

Another possibility! At a certain point in her life Emily "closed the valve of her attention" on society and dedicated herself to poetry. Who might be the "one" her soul chose then? The last lines sound final. How is this sound achieved? By diction, verse form, or what?

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Poem # 94: "Title divine is mine"

This poem is about the poet's (or the speaker's) marriage. "Title divine" says something about both the title and the husband. Who is he? The marriage is somehow incomplete; she's "The wife without/ The sign." I wonder what kind of sign she means. What does "acute" suggest about the poet's marriage? Is it happy? "Empress of Calvary": who was the "Emperor" of Calvary? What does it mean to be "Empress of Calvary"? What happened at Calvary? There was agony there for Christ and his faithful. What else does Calvary mean? Could this meaning of Calvary be related to the missing Sign? "Betrothed without the swoon . . .": what does this say about the poet's incomplete marriage? Is it a "real" one? "Born--Bridalled--Shrouded--/ In a day": Can this be read as a figurative description of a real marriage? How? "'My husband'" ties the conclusion to the "Wife" of the first lines. "Women," not the poet, say that. The poet is deprived somehow of the marriage most women have. What does the last question of the poem mean? "This" must refer to the normal real marriage of the women just mentioned. The "way" to what? To the completion of the poet's marriage?

Now, I think I can go back to that strange "Sign." The poet is married partially (or maybe just "betrothed?"); her marriage is not to an ordinary man but to the "Emperor of Calvary." What could the sign be--what must happen before she can be fully united to her husband?

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Poem # 44:

"Mine by the right of white election"

This poem has a tone unusual for Dickinson, I think. How should I describe that tone? How is it effected? By repetition? Punctuation? Rhyme? Diction? Rhythm?

The words, as usual, are very important. I remember a biblical passage about regeneration: "Though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Does this help make sense of the first stanza? Has "election" any special meaning for a poet of Puritan background?

What is the poet getting at in the second stanza? What's "the grave's repeal"? What's the "Titled, confirmed, delirious charter"? I don't understand the last line. What are the ages stealing?

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Student Packet

MAN AND MORAL LAW:

SIN AND LONELINESS: ALLEGORY

Grade 11

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Man and Moral Law:  
Sin and Loneliness: Allegory

**Core texts:**

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (New York: The Macmillan Company, Literary Heritage Edition, 1961).

Herman Melville, Four Short Novels (New York: Bantam Books, Inc. Bantam Classic FC16, 1959).

Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: The Macmillan Company, Literary Heritage Edition, 1961).

William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, foreword Carvel Collins (New York: The New American Library, Signet Classic CD9, 1960).

**Overview:**

This unit, like the 10th grade unit on which it is based, is entitled "Sin and Loneliness." Its purpose is to follow this theme as it has been presented in various American literary works. In the 10th grade, you looked at a number of possible ways of conceiving the sense of being a guilty and lonely thing: in some of the works which you examined, guiltiness and loneliness were understood in psychological terms as the frustration of some desire an individual wishes to fulfill; in other works which you read, the guilty and lonely sense was understood in religious terms as coming not from the frustration of the individual's wish or desire but as coming from its very existence as over against the wish or will of the Deity. When a work deals with the sense of guilt as part of a relationship to a God, the sense of guilt is sometimes understood in Christian terms--guiltiness before the God of the New Testament; sometimes in Jewish terms--guiltiness before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; sometimes in other terms--guiltiness before the Holy as it is understood by the religions of Asia and Africa. When the center according to which the individual's sense of aloneness, fear, and thwarting is measured is man rather than God we may be inclined to call the guilty sense a sense of frustration. And there may be men to whom obedience to what the community regards as God's will or Providence's will appears as personal frustration, and to whom, at the same time, the failure to accept frustration to protect the community also appears as wrong--this unit will consider some such cases.

The unit is a unit in American culture, studying a number of writers who are the heirs of Calvinist tradition in America. Normally we associate Calvinism with Puritan New England; however, the Calvinistic churches had almost as great a foothold in the American South as they did in New England, the effects of Puritanism upon Southern culture are as manifest as they are in New England, and, hence, we shall be considering two New England writers--

Nathaniel Hawthorne (whose "Young Goodman Brown" was considered in the 10th grade "Sin and Loneliness" units) and Herman Melville; and two Southern writers--Mark Twain and William Faulkner.

Calvin is the center of our interest for the moment though none of our writers was a Calvinist; it may be helpful to you to know what was the religious world which Calvin envisaged and which so influenced the religious and cultural imagination of our country in its early years and even until now. John Calvin was, of course, a sixteenth century Protestant reformer whose views came to prevail in the religious life of Switzerland, the Low Countries, parts of France, Germany, Scotland, and among a large number of Protestants in England. It was the Calvinist Protestants in England who founded the Massachusetts Bay colony and who played an extensive and creative role in the settling of a good portion of the South, and Calvin's thought which played a major role in the shaping of culture in those regions.

Calvin's thought is often said to center in the doctrine of original sin, the idea that man is totally evil. However, about this doctrine he constructed an elaborate and sophisticated theological system: he, first of all, held God to be all-powerful and all-knowing and to require of man that he know God as the supreme end of his effort; he regarded man as made originally in the image and likeness of God but as having fallen when Adam fell. Adam in his fall brought with him the whole human race which fell with him by virtue of the transmission of original sin; and man's depravity makes him oblivious of the anger of God, appears in the works of his flesh--impulsive or incontinent actions--and finally in the works of his spirit--deliberately willed, contrived evil: Chillingworth-style or Claggart-style evil. In Calvin's vision, all men are evil in all of their nature, condemned by a God who accepts nothing save a purity which is perfect, guilty of Adam's fault, not because they repeat what he did but because they have been cursed on account of his transgression, because an infection from him has been instilled in all men, infection of such a nature as to make all men responsible for it and subject to God's wrath. Children, even in their mother's womb, are guilty of original sin, not because they are held responsible for what Adam did, not because they have done anything, but because they are infected with an infection which comes down from Adam. This infected creature can do nothing to cure his own infection.

Calvin's doctrine of the work of Christ is essentially the orthodox or the ordinary Christian conception of Christ as a God-man who, through His crucifixion, reunited God with man and man with God, but Calvin's picture of how reconciliation is wrought is particularly bold and Baroque. If the first center of Calvin's theology lies in his picture of man as infected, the second lies in his picture of man's incapacity to obtain release from infection. It is in Calvin's emphasis upon the power of God and the weakness of man with respect to responding to the work of Christ that he differs from some other Christian thinkers. Faith is something which is given to man which makes him feel as reunited with God and as righteous; it extends backward to the behavior

of the individual so that his being reunited with God makes him God-like and purified.

The potential greatness of man in Calvin's scheme is tremendous but it is altogether an assigned greatness since God is all-knowing both as to the present, the past, and the future; whatever He foreknows, He also foreordains; He has chosen certain men from eternity as persons to receive the Holy Spirit, grace, to be sanctified--persons predestined to eternal life. The rest of mankind He has also chosen--predestined them to separation from Him and to eternal death. No human act comes in really. The people who God has chosen for eternal life cannot resist God's action upon them; they were seized against their own will, held by God, and made good; those people whom God seized He also keeps permanently in the faith so that once a man is chosen by God, he is always chosen.

Such a philosophy may suggest that man can relax since he cannot "act" to save or damn himself but this neglects Calvin's conception of the church as an agent in the preservation of civic order as well as in the regeneration of man. Calvin's God uses the church as a means of seizing men and as an instrument in the controlling of those men who have not been chosen of God. The only true state is that state in which the church has essential control, as in the Old Testament, and in Calvin's system of government as it was set up in Geneva, every member of the city of Geneva was brought under the rule of the church and the authority to discipline given to the preachers and elders of the church, who not only encouraged the "elect" but also regarded themselves as required to force correct or superficially correct behavior from the damned--who controlled education, recreation and business. Their control was rigid.

It was, as we have mentioned, the successors of Calvin who set up complete or partial theocracies or endeavored to set them up in France, the Low Countries, Scotland, and in some parts of England. As part of an effort to re-establish more-or-less the Genevan theocratic idea, our ancestors came to the New World. They would make a new Israel, a New Zion, for God's elect. One should not look to our ancestors on the Calvinistic side for religious toleration; they fled from a society which would not allow them to create their own kind of Zion to a society where they could create it; and creating their kind of Zion required that every man in the society adhere to the same rules, patterns of behavior, and system of belief.

One of the books which you will be reading is set in Puritan New England shortly after its founding. It should be understood that the book is written about 200 years after the date in which it is set, so that we have a nineteenth century writer viewing the heritage of seventeenth century Puritan, Christian New England. But The Scarlet Letter gives us some sense of what it was like to live in a thoroughly Calvinistic Christian society (although the achieving of historical verisimilitude is not Hawthorne's central purpose). Each of the other books gives us a look at a kind of Puritan society: Billy Budd, the Indomitable's society--Puritan in a rather general and metaphorical sense; Huck Finn, the Calvinistic society of the Midwest and South; and The Unvanquished, the piety and Puritanism



of the South and Granny. Each of these societies differs from the other, but each is to some degree affected by the attitudes and ideas of Calvin and Geneva. It will be one of your purposes in studying the unit to see how these attitudes and ideas come out in the various novels which you read.

The novelists not only deal with Calvinist Christian societies but they symbolize in their works a number of Calvinist ideas--most notably, the doctrine of original sin--of man's being somehow a limited and infected creature. What is said about the doctrine, of course, differs from novelist to novelist. What you will find in all four novelists is an effort to discover the extent to which man is limited, to discover the extent to which his limitations can be understood as sin or frustration; the extent to which they can be overcome through the means and methods prescribed by the elders of the old church and the extent to which man has to look to himself for overcoming them.

It should not be thought that, because our authors ponder the adequacy of the Calvinist Christian reading of life, they necessarily accept it in toto or reject it in toto. What they do is turn around, through the events of their works, the interpretation of life provided by Calvinist doctrine--testing its adequacy and its meaningfulness through their plots. All four of our writers sometimes suggest psychological and sometimes religious interpretations of sin and loneliness.

All four are allegorists, Hawthorne and Melville more so than the other two, but all of them to a considerable degree. The connection between allegory and Puritan culture may not be obvious since Calvin rejected the allegorical interpretation of the Bible which fired both Jews and Christians in Ancient and Medieval times, but Puritan people did enjoy books of emblems full of edifying allegories such as those of Frances Quarles. The Bible was on everyman's lips, its major parables and the symbols of its obviously poetic books providing additional allegorical wealth to the believer. An allegory is, of course, simply a matter of using one thing to say another, using an object to stand for an idea, using a cluster of objects to stand for a cluster of ideas, or using a continuous action to stand for a chain of related ideas (it is this last, this using of continuous actions to stand for a cluster of related ideas, that comes into the reading of Hawthorne and Melville; it is, on the other hand, the allegorical use of bits of detail--that-is--fraught to provide an incidental commentary on the action that characterizes Twain and Faulkner). In creating allegorical actions, our authors both 'try out' the theology of those founding fathers who carved a society in the wilderness and also try out and exploit the artistic traditions which these same fathers were fond of.

But our authors use one thing to stand for another with a difference from "the authors which we have just studied." Whereas the authors considered in the unit on "Individualism and Nature" emphasized man's infinite capacity for self-transcendence and therefore his capacity for freeing himself from civic restraint, the authors studied in this unit emphasize man's propensity to destroy man and hence the limitations of individualism. Similarly, whereas the authors



in our first unit used symbols which depend on the individual's unique perception of symbolic meaning in the world, the authors studied in this unit tend to depend on symbols hallowed by everyman's usage: a cross, a gallows, a dark wood, a rose. They look at social man and use a symbolism possessed in common by his social groups.

## I. The Scarlet Letter

It seems best to divide the book into acts and scenes, as one might any five act play; hence you should read the novel by "acts," not by chapters; it will be best if you read each "act" and then turn to the study and discussion questions. The explanation of each "act" which follows may help you see the dramatic situation and the symbolism involved:<sup>1</sup>

The Scarlet Letter as a novel is divided into twenty-four chapters. Considered as a tragic drama, it may be divided into five acts and subdivided into eight scenes. (An act may include two scenes if the second follows the first without any great lapse of time.) There are some chapters that fall outside the drama framework, since each of them deals with a single character (Chapter 5 with Hester, Chapter 6 with Pearl, Chapter 9 with Chillingworth, Chapter 11 with Dimmesdale, Chapter 13 with Hester again, Chapter 20 with Dimmesdale, and Chapter 24, the epilogue, with Hester chiefly) and since the method they follow is narrative or expository. These seven chapters serve as interludes in the dramatic action--or in one case as a postlude--and they provide some additional information about the characters that would have been difficult to incorporate into the dialogue. The essential chapters, however, are the other seventeen, in which Hawthorne is applying the scenic philosophy and method. Here is how they arrange themselves into rounded acts and scenes:

Act I, Scene I (Chapters 1 to 3) is laid in the marketplace of Boston, fifteen or twenty years after the founding of the city. On the right rear is the enormous nail-studded door of the prison with a wild rosebush growing beside it. On the left is the meeting house, with a balcony projecting over the stage. Under the balcony is the scaffold of the pillory, which will be the effective center of the drama. Hester Prynne emerges from the blackness of the prison, with the child on her arm not hiding the letter in A in scarlet cloth pinned to her breast; in the whole scene it is the one touch of brilliant color. She moves through the gray crowd and climbs the scaffold. From the balcony overhead the Reverent Mr. Dimmesdale adjures her to reveal the father of her child. "Believe me, Hester," he says, "though he were to step down from a high place and stand beside thee, on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so than to hide a guilty heart through life." Hester shakes her head. Looking down at the crowd she recognizes her wronged husband, who had been missing for two years, but he puts his finger on his lips to show that she must not reveal his identity. All the named

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The following explanation of each act of the novel is taken from Malcolm Cowley's essay "Five Acts of the Scarlet Letter," in Hawthorne, 1950; Twelve Original Essays, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958). The descriptions of the later acts in later sections of the packet also come from Cowley.

characters of the drama--including Governor Bellingham, John Wilson, and Mistress Hibbins--appear in this first scene; and there is also the Boston crowd, which speaks in strophe and antistrophe like a Greek chorus.

Scene 2 of the first act (Chapter 4) is a room in the prison that same June evening. Here, after the public tableau of the first scene, comes a private confrontation. Hester and the child have fallen ill, a leech is summoned to care for them, and the leech is Chillingworth, the betrayed husband. He tells her that the scarlet letter is a more effective punishment than any he might have imagined. "Live, therefore," he says, "and bear about thy doom with thee." After revealing his determination to find the lover and be revenged on him, Chillingworth extracts one promise from Hester: that just as she has kept the lover's identity a secret, so she must keep the husband's.

#### Study Guide Questions: Chapters 1-4

1. In the first chapter Hawthorne tells us what the rose bush might symbolize by telling us of its possible origin; he does not announce the symbolism of the prison door. What is the origin of the prison door? How long has it been there, etc.?
2. If you were asked to describe the opening scene in just two colors, what might they be? Why?
3. In Hawthorne's introductory "The Customs House," he compares the dilapidated wharves and the dilapidated moral state of Salem with its past prosperity and moral rigor (Pages 6-10) of the Washington Square Press edition). Do you find any such comparison between past and present in the first "act"? (You might look quite closely at Chapter 2).
4. Describe Hester when she emerges from the prison using the following criteria:
  - a. Physical appearance and dress.
  - b. Social status (according to the narrator, not the crowd).
  - c. Moral status (i.e., does the narrator describe her as good, bad, etc.)
  - d. Relationship with the townspeople.
5. Immediately after Hester steps from the prison, the women of the town gossip about her. Does each woman have the same opinion of Hester? If not, how do they differ?
6. Using the criteria of question 4, describe the man whom Hester recognizes in the crowd.
7. Using the criteria of question 4, describe the Reverend Dimmesdale.
8. What might be the climax of Act I, scene i?
9. Why doesn't Hester's husband want her to discover him to the townspeople?
10. Hester's husband does not want to harm her or her daughter Pearl. Whose soul does he want to destroy when he says, "Not thy soul...No, not thine!"?

#### Discussion Questions: Act I, Chapters 1-4 and "The Custom House"

# A. Symbolism and Allegory: Chapters I-IV:

In the first Chapter, Hawthorne tells you how to read the symbols in his novel. Notice that he gives the reader several interpretations of the rose bush: it has survived from the wilderness, it sprung from the footsteps of Anne Hutchinson, it may serve as the symbol of "some sweet moral blossom," it may "relieve the darkening close of a tale of frailty and sorrow." This wealth of meanings does not imply vagueness but rather a richness in the levels of symbolism. First of all, the rose bush is simply a fictional bush which Hawthorne has placed by the prison, a bush such as the one you may have in your yard. Second, it has a legendary significance which lives in the minds of the townspeople as having sprung from the footsteps of Anne Hutchinson.<sup>2</sup> Third, it has a moral significance for Hawthorne and for the reader (notice that Hawthorne offers it to the reader suggesting that he learn from it) as a symbol for martyrdom at the hands of an intolerant Puritan community and also as a symbol of the "deep heart of Nature." The rose as a symbol of both the "deep heart of Nature" and of the martyrdom of womanhood stands opposite to the prison door which shuts in and restricts the "natural" in men and women. The prison door may also operate on several levels. It is a fictional door; it is a necessity in the social life of a supposed Utopian society; it "Like all that pertains to crime...seemed never to have known a youthful era"; it is the symbol of a weary, aged sin within society, a sin which was transported intact from the old world to the new as men come to the new to found a New Utopia or a New Zion. The door will exist as long as men exist to isolate the sinner behind society's prison door. Both the rose and door are likely physical objects in the scene; both have social significance, the door as a necessity in the social order, the rose as a necessary legend in the minds of the townspeople; but both are finally symbolic--the "black flower of civilized society," as Hawthorne calls the prison opposed the red "deep heart of Nature" of the rose.

When we analyze Hawthorne's novel this closely, we gain a greater appreciation of the novel's complexity. But dangers exist in this approach. We may start on a witch hunt for symbols--seeing symbolism in every door knob and shoe in the story. But door knobs and shoes do not symbolize a thing in The Scarlet Letter. Obviously we must discuss levels of meaning when Hawthorne explicitly tells us "Here is a symbol"; we may also look for symbolic richness when the dramatic tension is concentrated on an object rich in cultural symbolism (for example, the

<sup>2</sup> Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) emigrated from England to Massachusetts (1634) where her vigorous intellect soon led her to hold informal weekly meetings of women, in which she discussed the sermons of the previous Sunday and advocated a 'covenant of grace' based on the individual's direct reception of God's grace, as opposed to the orthodox belief in a 'covenant of works,' based on obedience to the statutes of church and state. She was called on Antinomian, was said to be traducing the ministers and their ministry; and although Governor Vance, her brother-in-law John Wheelwright, and others supported her views, a synod of churches excommunicated her and Governor Winthrop banished her from the colony. (from The Oxford Companion to American Literature.)



scaffold) or when the very title of the novel suggests that we look past the texture of the cloth that is the scarlet A. Or the use and arrangement of objects which carry traditional Christian allegorical meanings may give us a clue as to deeper levels of Hawthorne's book even if his implied meaning is not perfectly orthodox.

As you read, look for the various levels related to the characters in the novel. As you follow the symbolism of the scarlet A, the meaning you assign to the letter will probably change; there is no one interpretation of the letter. Once you spot the changes, you should notice a change in either the plot or in the characters of the novel. By answering the following questions you should begin to discover the real complexity, and real artistry, of the novel.

1. Read quite carefully Hawthorne's description of the faded scarlet letter which he finds in the Custom House attic (p. 31 Washington Square Press) and compare this with the description of the letter in Chapter 2, "The Market Place" (pp. 54, 47, WSP):
  - a. Does the letter have any significance to those who work in the Custom House as compared to its significance to those who surround Hester?
  - b. Does the letter Hawthorne finds have any effect on him when he finds the faded thing? If we were to classify its effect according to one of three levels of meaning, would we say that it's meaning is literal, symbolic in a social way, or symbolic in a moral way?
  - c. Does the faded condition of the letter have anything to do with the delapidated wharves and general decay surrounding the Custom House?
  - d. Notice that the letter, and the sin it represents, isolates Hester from the crowd, but she is not alone--everyone is fully aware of her. In fact, the concentration on the letter produces the isolation. Note also that the members of the Custom House are isolated from each other. What produces their isolation? (You might look closely at pp. 57 and 22 of the WSP edition.)
2. Discuss the structure of the society which surrounds Hester and in which she exists. Compare it with the structure of the society in the Custom House. You might take as a starting point the following quotation from Chapter 3, "The Recognition": "The other eminent characters, by whom the chief ruler was surrounded, were distinguished by a dignity of mien, belonging to a period when the forms of authority were felt to possess the sacredness of divine institutions."
3. What is Hawthorne's opinion of each level of society? of Hester? her husband? Dimmesdale? the Governor?

#### B. Characterization: Chapters I-IV:

Hawthorne did not think of his book as a novel, but as a "romance," he thought of his characters not as representations of real people but as representations of abstractions. But we immediately want to object--this book "feels" real--it seems to be history, not fable; the stuff of life, not allegory. To understand this problem we might try to understand

Hawthorne's idea of "romance" by noticing what Hawthorne describes-- if this is a realistic book, we should see the grass, feel the clothes the characters wear, hear the cries of Pearl; but we do not--we only know that there is grass outside the prison, that Hester does wear a richly embroidered dress, that Pearl does cry. Take the scaffold that Hester must stand upon (p. 55, WSP). We first meet the scaffold as a symbol not as a object of wood and iron. "It stood nearly beneath the eaves of Boston's earliest church, and appeared to be a fixture there." It is a fixture, a necessity, just as the prison is a necessity; and it stands under the eaves of the church symbolizing "the forms of authority [possessing] the sacredness of Divine institutions." Hawthorne continues to describe the scaffold: "In fact, this scaffold constituted a portion of a penal machine, which now, for two or three generations past, has been merely historical and traditionary among us..." We do not learn the physical properties of the scaffold until much later: "The very idea of ignominy was embodied and made manifest in this contrivance of wood and iron"; the wood and iron are merely the properties of the symbol. Note that Hawthorne uses a very important word: "manifest"; the wood and iron are the manifestations of ignominy, the manifestations of an abstract concept. This is what Hawthorne is talking about when he calls his book a romance; the concrete objects he describes are there to "manifest" the ideas he wants to present: Punishment, sin, restitution, guilt, repentance. This idea of the concrete representation of the abstract allows us to the theory of art as expressed in "The Custom House":

Glancing at the looking-glass, we behold--deep within its haunted verge--the smouldering glow of the half-extinguished anthracite, the white moonbeams on the floor, and a repetition of all the gleam and shadows of the picture, with one remove further from the actual, and nearer to the imaginative. Then, at such an hour, and with this scene before him, if a man, sitting all alone, cannot dream strange things, and make them look like truth, he needs never try to write romances. (p. 37, WSP.)

The "actual" (the real object, the scaffold) is moved into the realm of the "imaginative" to stand for the abstract (the "penal machine"); the artist who tries to "make the abstract look like truth." Note that "truth" does not mean "real"; it means a deeper "real"--the abstract idea. That may be why when one reads The Scarlet Letter, one so often misses what is going on. What appears to be concrete really stands for an abstraction and is to be taken symbolically. Recall the first description of Hester's husband, Chillingworth:

He was small in stature, with a furrowed visage, which, as yet, could hardly be termed aged. There was a remarkable intelligence in his features, as of a person who had so cultivated his mental port that it could not fail to mould the physical itself, and become manifest by unmistakable tokens.

→ The underlined words are abstract; in the whole description our only clues to his appearance are the words "small" and "furrowed," features which are not particularly distinctive in a crowd. What separates Chillingworth from the crowd is his "intelligence," the way in which his features manifest

intelligence (again we meet the important word "manifest"). The furrows of his brow and the hunchback are "tokens" of his intellect. But we still have trouble picturing Chillingworth; we may conjecture a man, but the man we construct comes to us from the realm of the abstract. We ask "what does a man who is intelligent, convincing, rather sneaky and 'furrowed' look like?" It is interesting to notice that Shakespeare's Iago was a small man, that Shakespeare's villain King Richard III was "crook-backed," and that Marlowe's Faustus, who was damned for his intellectual pride, looks quite like Chillingworth. Milton's Satan, certainly a figure for intellectual and spiritual pride, looks very like our imagined Chillingworth:

Darkened so, yet shone  
Above them all th' Archangel: but his face  
Deep scars of thunder hard intrenched, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride  
Waiting revenge. Cruel his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion. . . (Paradise Lost, Book I,  
ll. 599-604)

Even the physical features of our villain have symbolic connotations. They partake of the physical features of past intellectual villains.

Chillingworth is a physician, a physician who learned his business of leaching from the Indians of the forest; Hester asks him if he learned his art from the "Black Man that haunts the forest round about us?"

Hawthorne has created allegorical characters and placed them on the moral stage of a symbolic Boston. But amid all this presentation of the abstractions by which men live, Hawthorne manages to present ideas in the shape of people who move and live--living emblems acting out the drama of guilt, the drama demanded by an allegory set in a pseudo-real setting. The novel is a fine blending of the allegorical and the actual, a strange thing which does "look like truth" on both the moral and the literal level; it is a "speaking picture."

With the above discussion in mind, answer the following discussion questions concerning the characters in Act I.

#### Chapters 1-4:

1. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are not merely opposites. Compare the two characters. What traits do they share? What traits does Dimmesdale have that Chillingworth does not have?
2. In paragraph three of chapter 3, "The Recognition," there is a detailed description of the inward Chillingworth. How does this description parallel the description of Satan in the quotation from Pardise Lost above? What significance is there in this parallel?
3. The townspeople have a definite view of all three major characters presented in the first act. Compare their feelings toward Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth. Notice that the citizens do not know the connections between these characters, that only we do. How does Hawthorne tell us they are involved with each other?



4. Pearl is not dramatically prominent in Act I even though she is held by Hester. What does receive all the attention in these chapters? Why do you feel this is so? Notice that Pearl is not a fully developed symbolic character as yet. Be sure to watch for the growing details of symbolism that become attached to her name and character.

Now look at Chapters 5 and 6 which only deal with characters.

Hester: Chapter 5

1. Hester feels her life after her prison term will be harder than when the law held her "in his iron arm." What will make her life harder?
2. Why doesn't Hester just move away? After all, the sentence had "no restrictive clause of her condemnation within the limits of the Private Settlement, so remote and so obscure--free to return to her birth place."
3. Hester sews for a living. What is ironic about the fact that she sews the clothes used in state processions and funerals?
4. Toward the end of the Chapter, Hawthorne describes individual reactions to the scarlet letter. What are they? How do they relate to Hester's sin?

Pearl: Chapter 6

1. Hawthorne remarks that Pearl has no physical defects--she's a beautiful child--but she has inner or spiritual defects. Name several of these defects. How might they relate to Hester? to the symbolism of the prison?
2. Hawthorne says that Pearl is the result of Hester's sin and "The warfare of Hester's spirit." Using this idea as a hint, identify the face that is reflected in Pearl's eyes in the following quotation:

"she [Hester] beheld, not her own miniature portrait, but another face, in the small black mirror of Pearl's eye. It was a face, fiend-like, full of smiling malice, yet bearing the semblance of features that she had known full well, though seldom with a smile, and never with malice in them" (p. 47, WSP)

3. What does Pearl play with? Is she accepted by the children of the town? Why or why not?
4. Reread the last page of Chapter 3, "The Recognition." How might Pearl's remark "I have no Heavenly Father!" relate to Hester's remark in Chapter 3.

Act II, Scene 1 (Chapters 7 and 8) is laid in the governor's hall, three years after the events of the first act. Little Pearl is thought to be such a strange and willful child that there has been talk among the Puritan magistrates of taking her away from her sinful mother. When Hester, now a seamstress, comes to deliver a pair of embroidered gloves to Governor Bellingham, there is an informal trial of her case. Chillingworth plays an



ambiguous part in it, but Dimmesdale--when Hester demands that he speak--makes such an eloquent plea that she is allowed to keep the child. All the named characters are again present--down to Mistress Hibbins, who, at the end of the scene, invites Hester to attend a witches' sabbath in the forest. Hester refuses with a triumphant smile:

"I must tarry at home," she says, "to keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they taken her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest, and signed my name in the Black Man's book, and that with mine own blood!"

This tableau and its brief epilogue are followed once more by a private confrontation. Scene 2 of the second act (Chapter 10) is set in Chillingworth's laboratory, among the retorts and crucibles. The old leech suspects Dimmesdale and has taken up residence in the same house, to continue all through the scene his relentless probing of Dimmesdale's heart. The minister will not confess, but at the curtain, Chillingworth accidentally finds proof that he is indeed the guilty man.

#### Study Guide Questions (Chapters 5 and 6 and Act II):

1. Why do the townspeople want to rid Hester of Pearl?
2. Describe Pearl's costume when she and Hester go to Governor Bellingham's. What happens along the way?
3. Describe the reflection Hester and Pearl view in the armor.
4. What grows in Governor Bellingham's garden? Have you met any of these plants before in the book?
5. Who intervenes to save Pearl for Hester? What other scene in the novel is like this one?
6. Why does Rev. Wilson want to take Pearl from Hester? Where do the questions he asks come from?
7. Outline Dimmesdale's argument in favor of Hester. In what way does he prove to be right?
8. List the incidents that tell you Pearl is really an "Elf Child."
9. Mistress Hibbins wants Hester to go into the forest and sign her name in the Black Man's book. Who else in the novel is associated with the Black Man?

#### Discussion Questions (Chapters 5 and 6 and Act II):

1. Trace the looks and function of Pearl's clothes from Chapter 5 through Chapter 8. How do they reflect Hester's inner struggle and sin? Do they relate to the overpowering scarlet "A" Hester sees reflected in the Governor's armor?
2. Hawthorne states in Chapter 6: "We have as yet hardly spoken of the infant; that little creature, whose innocent life had sprung, by the inscrutable decree of Providence, a lovely and immortal flower, out of the rank luxury of a guilty passion." What is "Providence" and how does Pearl serve "Providence"? Notice Hawthorne calls her a flower and later (Chapter 8) Pearl tells Rev. Wilson she was

plucked from the rose bush at the prison door. What does this add to the original symbol we met in Chapter 1? Does it add to the literal, social, or moral level of the symbolism?

3. Notice that Pearl is a confusing name for the little girl--she has none of the white-quiet attributes of her name, she is dressed in red, she is devil-like not pearl-like. Her literal person contradicts the moral significance of her name; she is quite a complex symbol and, of all the allegorical characters in the novel, she is least "real" and most imaginative. Reread the first paragraph of Chapter 6 and discuss the complexity of Pearl as a symbol. You should look up the Biblical verse alluded to, "a pearl of great price" by using a Biblical concordance. How might the moral significance of her name relate to the idea of "Providence" discussed in question 2?
4. Notice that Chillingworth wants to analyze Pearl as one might a laboratory rat and that Mr. Wilson wants to condemn her as the result of sin. What is Rev. Dimmesdale's reaction? Notice also that Governor Bellingham's English ornamental garden does not flourish amid the pumpkin vines of the new world. Does the constant contrast between old world (European) and new world ways have anything to do with the contrast between the Governor's and Dimmesdale's opinions about Hester and Pearl. Why might Dimmesdale show mercy toward them and the Governor and Mr. Wilson not?
5. Is Pearl really an "elf-child" and a "witch"? Discuss Pearl's character with reference to the discussion of characterization in Act I.

Chillingworth and Dimmesdale (Chapters 9-11): Study Guide Questions:

1. When Chillingworth "attaches" himself to Rev. Dimmesdale as his personal physician, what is the rumor about town?
2. Hawthorne divides human psychology into these parts: heart, intellect and imagination (p. 127, WSP). What part(s) of Dimmesdale's psychology are diseased? Would it be valid to equate Chillingworth to a modern psychiatrist? Why or why not?
3. How do the furniture, tapestries, and books in Chillingworth's and Dimmesdale's new lodging reflect the personality of each?
4. What changes in Chillingworth do the citizens notice after he moves in with Dimmesdale? To what do the citizens attribute this change?
5. Dimmesdale gives several reasons guilty hearts do not confess. (p. 136, WSP) List these reasons. Do any of them apply to Dimmesdale himself?
6. What type of freedom does Dimmesdale assign to Pearl when he and Chillingworth see her dancing on the graves?
7. What does Pearl call Chillingworth?
8. What do you think Chillingworth sees when he "trust aside [Dimmesdale's] vestment that, hitherto, had been always covered even from the professional eye"?
9. What good does Dimmesdale achieve in spite of his guilty and sick heart?

Discussion Questions (Chapters 9-11):

1. Throughout Chapters 9-11, Hawthorne gives two or more meanings for Chillingworth's activities. At times he is a man, at others a

Satan who has come for Dimmesdale's soul. We might say, at times Chillingworth is given a literal interpretation, at others a symbolic one. Trace the varying attitudes toward Chillingworth. Who holds these attitudes? Why might Hawthorne give two interpretations of one event?

2. Chillingworth seems consumed by his intellect, so much so "that he lost the spiritual view of existence." Dimmesdale also seems consumed by one of the faculties--"heart, intellect, or imagination." Discuss the motivations for Dimmesdale's behavior, sickness, etc.
3. Who seems to be suffering more, Hester or Dimmesdale? Compare and contrast the nature of each's suffering. A close look at Chapter 10 might help you answer this question.
4. Dimmesdale tells Chillingworth he needs no earthly physician; you should recognize this as a reference to Christ as the physician to the soul--an idea that suggests Chillingworth is an anti-Christ. With this in mind discuss the function of Chillingworth's services to Dimmesdale.

Act III (Chapter 12) has only one scene, the scaffold of the pillory. Four years have passed since the second act. Subtly tortured by Chillingworth and finally driven half-insane, Dimmesdale has dressed in his ministerial robes and left his room at midnight, hoping to find relief in a private mimicry of public confession. Standing on the scaffold he shrieks aloud, but nobody recognizes his voice. Governor Bellingham and Mistress Hibbins both open their windows to peer into the night. On his way home from Governor Winthrop's deathbed, good John Wilson walks through the marketplace in a halo of lanternlight; he does not look up at the pillory. Then, coming from the same deathbed, Hester appears with little Pearl, and Dimmesdale invites them to join him on the scaffold. Holding one another's hands they form what Hawthorne calls "an electric chain," and Dimmesdale feels a new life pouring like a torrent into his heart.

"Minister!" Pearl whispers. "Wilt thou stand here with mother and me tomorrow noontide?"

When Dimmesdale refuses, she tries to pull her hand away. At this moment a meteor gleams through a cloud forming a scarlet A in the heavens while it also reveals the little group on the scaffold. It is another of Hawthorne's many lighting effects, based partly on his Emersonian belief that the outer world is a visible manifestation of the inner, but also based partly on his instinct for theatre; one might almost speak of his staginess. While the meteor is still glowing, Chillingworth appears to lead the minister back to his torture chamber. This tableau, occurring at the exact center of the drama, is the turning point of The Scarlet Letter; from now on the tempo will be quicker. The first half of the story has covered a space of seven years; the second half will cover no more than fifteen days.



## Study Guide Questions (Chapter 12):

1. Chapter 12 opens, "Walking in the shadow of a dream," and references to dreams and visions occur throughout this very important chapter. Make a list of the dream-ghost-vision references that occur in the chapter. This list should help you answer several of the discussion questions.
2. When Dimmesdale screams what are the metaphors Hawthorne uses to describe the scream?
3. Hawthorne describes several of the townspeople immediately after Dimmesdale screams. Who are they and where have we met them before?
4. Where has the Rev. Wilson been? How does his description contrast with that of the Rev. Dimmesdale?
5. Where have Hester and Pearl been? For what purpose?
6. List the symbolic details that are connected with Dimmesdale, Hester and Pearl when the meteor lights the sky.
7. How do the townspeople interpret meteors? How do they interpret the one Dimmesdale sees?
8. Who else is present near the scaffold?
9. Why might the "grey-bearded sexton" say Satan dropped Dimmesdale's black glove? In what sense did Dimmesdale have a glove over his heart when he "confessed" on the scaffold?

## Discussion Questions (Chapter 12):

1. Certainly this scene is one of the most important in the novel. What makes it so in terms of the plot, in terms of the symbolism? You might compare this scene with the opening pillory scene.
2. Hawthorne calls Dimmesdale's "confession" a mock penitence, a "Mockery at which angels blushed and wept, while fiends rejoiced, with jeering laughter!" In what way is this a mock confession? You might look quite closely at the link between the Reverend and Pearl, their similar laughter, their conversation, and their relationship to the others in the scene.
3. Discuss the appearance of the meteor in terms of the three levels of symbolism discussed in Act I. Read quite carefully the varying interpretations of the meteor by each of the characters and the townspeople. You might use the list of dream references mentioned in Study Guide Question #1 for Act III. Certainly the following quotation from Dimmesdale's interpretation of the meteor should be the center of your discussion:

But what shall we say, when an individual discovers a revelation addressed to himself alone, on the same vast sheet of record! In such a case, it could only be the symptom of a highly disordered mental state, when a man, rendered morbidly self-contemplative by long, intense, and secret pain, had extended his egotism over the whole expanse of nature, until the firmament itself should appear no more than a fitting page for his soul's history and fate! (pp. 160-1, WSP)

4. In the foreground of this scene is Dimmesdale--tortured by his personal sense of guilt (contrasted to Hester's personal and social torture



when she stood on the scaffold) and in the background is the death of Governor Winthrop. How do the two events relate? The following questions might help you make the comparison:

- a. Should Reverend Dimmesdale watch at the bedside of the dying Governor Winthrop with Hester and Reverend Wilson? Is it not his duty as a minister?
- b. Does Winthrop's social position and occupation have any bearing on the events that have or are taking place on the scaffold?
- c. How does Governor Winthrop's death relate to the meteor?

Hester: Chapter 13: Study Guide Questions:

1. What changes do you find in the townspeople's attitude toward Hester and her scarlet letter? What has caused these changes?
2. What changes do you find in Hester? What has caused these changes?
3. Hawthorne remarks, "The scarlet letter had not done its office."  
What was the scarlet letter suppose to do? Why do you feel it has failed?

Act IV takes up two intimate scenes, the second of which is the longest in the drama. Scene 1 (Chapters 14 and 15) is laid on the seashore where Hester accosts the old leech and begs him to release her from her promise not to tell Dimmesdale that he is the wronged husband. Chillingworth answers in a speech that reveals not only his own heart but the other side of Hawthorne's philosophy. The Emersonian side contributed to his stage effects, but it was his surviving feeling for the sense of sin in Calvinism that enabled him to conceive a tragic drama.

"Peace, Hester, Peace!" the old man says. "It is not granted me to pardon. . . My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all we suffer: by thy first step away thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may! Now go thy ways, and deal as though wilt with yonder man."

He goes back to gathering his herbs. Hester calls to Pearl, who, as they leave the stage, keeps asking her, "Mother!--why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?"

Study Guide Questions (Chapters 14 and 15):

1. Hester notices a change in Chillingworth, but not necessarily a physical change. What is this change and what could possibly have caused it? You might look quite closely at the description of Chillingworth's soul.

2. Chillingworth says to Hester, "I have already told thee what I am! A fiend! Who made me so?" What is the answer to the last question of Chillingworth's?
3. Chillingworth says, "Let the black flower blossom as it may." Where have you met the "black flower" before? What does it represent in this scene? What is a typical illusion? Do you understand the doctrine of types in the Bible (cf. 7th Grade, Ancient Hebrew Narrative).
4. Why was Hester's marriage to Chillingworth a failure from the beginning? What psychological traits in each character fail to match?
5. How does Pearl mock her mother while playing on the beach?
6. Describe Pearl's moral characteristics as stated by Hawthorne.
7. What are the two questions Pearl keeps asking Hester? Are they answered?

Discussion Questions (Chapters 14 and 15):

1. Compare the following description of Satan entering Eden (from Milton's Paradise Lost) with the description of Chillingworth in Chapter 14. What do the two have in common? Is Chillingworth really Chill-ing-worth?

Satan, now first inflamed rage, For now came down,  
 The tempter, ere th' Accuser, of mankind,  
 To wreak on innocent frail Man his loss  
 Of that first battle, and his flight to Hell.  
 Yet not rejoicing in his speed, though bold  
 Far off and fearless, nor with cause to boast,  
 Begins his dire attempt; which, nigh the birth  
 Now rolling, boils in his tumultuous breast,  
 And like a devilish engine back recoils  
 Upon himself. Horror and doubt distract  
 His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir  
 The Hell within him; for within him Hell  
 He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell  
 One step, no more than from himself, can fly  
 By change of place. Now Conscience wakes Despair  
 That slumbered; wakes the bitter memory  
 Of what he was, what is, and what must be  
 Worse. . . (Book IV, ll. 8-26.)

2. Discuss Pearl's mockery of the Scarlet Letter. Is there any significance in the fact that the letter she places on her own breast is green? Notice that when Hester asks Pearl what the letter means, Pearl answers with a literal explanation: "It is the great letter A. Thou hast taught me in the horn-book." Pearl certainly seems to understand the other levels when she connects Dimmesdale's gesture--the hand over the heart--with the letter. How does Pearl know the significance of the letter? You might look closely at the "elf" qualities in her moral nature to help answer this question.
3. Compare in some detail the attitudes of the townspeople, expressed in Chapter 15, with their attitudes as expressed in the opening scene at the scaffold. How have the attitudes changed? Is there any evidence in the first scene that the attitudes might change?

Scene 2 of the fourth act (including four chapters, 16-19) is set in the forest, which forms another contrast with the marketplace and helps to reveal the moral background of Hawthorne's drama. The forest, he tells us in what might almost be a stage direction, is an image of the moral wilderness in which Hester has long been wandering. But it was more than that for Hawthorne himself, and a close reading shows that the forest is also an image of the world men enter when they follow their passions and revolt against the community. In this sense little Pearl, the natural child, is a daughter of the forest and we observe in this scene that she is perfectly at home there. Witches like Mistress Hibbins go into the forest to dance at the Indian powwows and with Lapland wizards, and Hester has been tempted to follow them. When she meets Dimmesdale in the forest, although she intends only to warn him against Chillingworth, it is natural in this setting that she should also urge him to defy the laws of the tribe and flee with her to a foreign country. The minister agrees; they will take passage on a Bristol cruiser then moored in the harbor. For a long moment Hester unpins the scarlet A from her dress and lets down her long black glossy hair; but Pearl, who has been called back from playing at the brookside, sulks until she pins the letter on her breast again.

On his way back to Boston (in Chapter 20) Dimmesdale meets Mistress Hibbins. "So, reverend Sir, you made a visit into the forest," says the witchlady, nodding her high head-dress at him. "The next time, I pray you to allow me only a fair warning, and I shall be proud to bear you company."

#### Study Guide Questions (Chapters 16-19):

1. Who arranges the meeting in the forest between Hester and Dimmesdale?
2. Describe the physical and moral appearance of Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale as portrayed in Chapter 16.
3. What type of a story does Pearl want to hear from Hester?
4. What gesture of Dimmesdale's is becoming as prominent as Hester's scarlet A?
5. When Hester and Dimmesdale meet what is their first concern?
6. Dimmesdale remarks, "Of penance, I have had enough! Of penitence, there has been none!" What is the difference between "penance" and "penitence"?
7. What is Dimmesdale's reaction when Hester tells him that Chillingworth is her husband? What changes occur in his features? Does the change remind you of anyone else in the novel?
8. In Chapter 17 who is the "Pastor" and who is the "Parishoner"? Who does all the preaching in this chapter?
9. Who is a worse sinner than Hester and Dimmesdale? Why?
10. Who suggests that they flee from Boston?
11. After reading paragraphs one and two of Chapter 18, would you say



- the Scarlet Letter had inflicted the "proper" punishment on Hester?
12. How does "nature sympathize" when Hester throws off her letter?
  13. What links do you find between Pearl and the forest? Remember what Hawthorne called the forest at the beginning of Chapter 18.
  14. Place the actors in this scene--where they are standing, what gestures they make, what they are wearing.
  15. Why won't Pearl come across the brook to Hester and Dimmesdale?

Discussion Questions (Chapters 16-19):

1. Pearl throughout this act is a symbol but hardly a fictional human being. What must happen to her before she will be humanized? What is her function in this scene? A close look at Chapter 16, "A Forest Walk," might help you here.
2. Discuss the detailed symbolism of the forest. Hawthorne calls it "a moral wilderness" where men may be free, but may "run amiss." What details link the forest to Pearl? to Hester? How does the forest contrast to Dimmesdale's principles? A close look at Chapter 18, "A Flood of Sunshine" will help you.
3. Compare and contrast the forest and the town. You might use the equations forest = freedom and town = restriction as a starting point. Warning: do not assume that freedom is necessarily a good thing.
4. Dimmesdale says that Chillingworth is a worse being than either he or Hester: "He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart." By what means has Chillingworth violated the "sanctity of a human heart"? What have Hester and Dimmesdale violated? Compare and contrast the sin of Chillingworth with the sin of Hester and Dimmesdale.
5. We might draw circles around character groupings in this scene as Hawthorne suggests when Hester draws Dimmesdale toward her and her past, "Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past and clustered themselves, with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour." The best way to describe this scene might be "the magic circle." This circle is violated by Pearl and her "magic." Notice that "circle" implies bounds and restrictions, and it implies that Hester and Dimmesdale are alone and isolated. This magic circle of love which isolates Dimmesdale and Hester can exist only in the forest without Pearl. When Pearl enters, the remembrance of sin enters and the circle of love breaks. We might draw other circles. Certainly Dimmesdale and Chillingworth form one circle, Pearl and Hester another, and the entire town encircles all the characters. Discuss the forces which hold the separate circles together; we have already discussed the love that holds Hester and Dimmesdale together in the "moral" forest. What holds Hester to Pearl? Chillingworth to Dimmesdale? Chillingworth to Hester?

Dimmesdale: Chapter 20: Study Guide Questions:

1. How are Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale to leave Boston? Where are they to go?



2. What is so peculiar about the town when Dimmesdale returns from the woods? What accounts for the change in the whole town?
3. When Dimmesdale returns to town, he has wild impulses to destroy the innocence of his parishioners. Recount these events. What is the motivation for these acts?
4. When Dimmesdale returns to his study, who greets him?
5. Dimmesdale throws away his sermon and begins another. Why does he do this? What has inspired the second sermon?
6. What is an "Election Sermon"? What is the pun on the word "election"?

Act V, in a single scene (Chapters 21-23), takes place three days after the meeting in the forest and is the culmination toward which all the drama has been moving. Once again it is laid in the marketplace, with all the named characters present, as well as the Bristol shipmaster and the Boston crowd that speaks with the voices of the tribe. Dimmesdale preaches the Election Sermon, the climax of his ministerial career, while Hester listens outside the meeting house. The shipmaster tells her that Chillingworth has taken passage on the same vessel; there will be no escape. Then Dimmesdale appears in a great procession of Puritan worthies, and instead of marching with them to the official banquet, he totters up the steps of the scaffold after calling on Hester to support him. At last they are standing together, in public, on the pedestal of shame.

"Is this not better," Dimmesdale murmurs, "than what we dreamed of in the forest?" Facing the crowd he tears open his ministerial band and shows that there is a scarlet A imprinted on his own flesh. He has made his public confession and now, at the point of death, he feels reconciled with the community. As he sinks to the scaffold, Chillingworth kneels over him repeating, "Thou hast escaped me." Pearl kisses her father on his lips, and the tears that she lets fall are the pledge that she will cease to be an outcast, an embodiment of the scarlet letter, a daughter of the forest, and instead will grow up among human joys and sorrows.

#### Study Guide Questions (Chapters 21-23):

1. Compare the dress of the captain of the "Spanish Main" and the dress of most of the Puritan townspeople.
2. What allows Hester to talk to the captain without scandal when any other woman of the community would be ruined if she but spoke one word?
3. Hawthorne contrasts the procession then with a procession now (circa. 1850). What difference does he establish? Where has Hawthorne used other then-now contrasts in the novel?
4. What is the function of Mistress Hibbins in Chapter 22?
5. Hawthorne remarks of Dimmesdale's sermon: "It was this profound and continual undertone that gave the clergyman his most appropriate power." What is this "undertone"?

6. The townspeople and strangers form a "magic circle of ignominy" around Hester in order to view the Scarlet Letter. Record the varying attitudes of these people toward the letter.
7. What was the topic of Dimmesdale's sermon? What relevance does the sermon topic have to the general theme of the novel?
8. Compare Dimmesdale's features before and after the sermon. What has caused the change.
9. What happens to Pearl when she kisses Dimmesdale as he is dying?

#### Discussion Questions (Chapters 21-23):

1. In Chapter 21 and 22 we meet another "magic circle" but it does not seem to be the same one we met in the forest. Compare the two "circles"--the one in the forest and the one in the town. What isolates Hester in both cases? Are different people included in each circle?
2. Why has Dimmesdale escaped Chillingworth when he makes his confession? What has he escaped from?
3. In Chapter 23 Pearl ceases to be an allegorical figure and becomes a human being. What has humanized her?

#### Conclusion (Chapter 24):

1. Hawthorne gives five or six theories for the A on Dimmesdale's chest and "the reader may choose among these theories." Notice that the theories do not necessarily contradict each other, rather they seem to be different levels of explanation, just as we have discussed different levels of symbolism. Divide these theories as to whether they are literal, social or moral.
2. Why do you think Chillingworth dies soon after Dimmesdale's confession? Why do you suppose Chillingworth left all his money to Pearl?
3. Even though Hester could easily leave Boston, she doesn't. Why not?
4. What devices does Hawthorne use to make the reader feel his book is historically accurate? Why might he want the book to be "historical"? Might he have tongue-in-cheek here?

## II. Billy Budd

### Introduction:

We noticed in The Scarlet Letter that the circle was a very prominent image and idea. The "magic circle" enclosed Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest just as the society enclosed all the characters in a circle of perpetual guilt and penance. In Billy Budd we have another "closed" world that acts as a stage for a morality play but instead of a town, we have a ship. Both Boston and the "Indomitable" (the ship which is our stage) are isolated from the rest of the world; Boston was, in the time scheme of The Scarlet Letter, an outpost of European civilization and the "Indomitable," in Billy Budd, is away from the main British fleet on scouting duty. Both the town and the ship are closed societies: the society's power is held by one man and his judgments determine the lives of its members.

Both novels use similar literary techniques--the allegorical characters, the concrete embodiment of the abstract, the social and the moral, the posing of issues in the context of the stock "dramatic" scene; both authors know similar literary traditions--the Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Shakespearean drama, Milton's Paradise Lost, Calvinistic theology, and transcendentalist philosophy. But Billy Budd is not a reprint of The Scarlet Letter.

When Melville was thirteen years old--in 1832--his father died, his mind deranged by worry and overwork. His father had been an importer of dry goods who had established himself in Albany and then, prospering, had moved to New York City. His father believed that money is "the only solid substratum on which any man can safely build in this world" and was never deflected toward any other goal. When a depression in the 1830's affected his business adversely, he went deeply in debt and moved back to Albany badly beaten. Melville, at fifteen, two years after his father's early death, had to leave the Albany Academy and become a clerk in a bank. In 1837, the year of the panic, he shipped for Liverpool as a common sailor and his first glimpse of the brutality and suffering of the world as seen through a sailor's eyes was intensified by his sense of the contrast between his present position and his family's former well-being. After four months of this exposure to the harsh realities of life, he returned to New York and tried teaching for a year. In 1841 he sailed as a sailor from New Bedford, Massachusetts, on a trip that was to keep him at sea or in the South Pacific island area until 1844. At the Marquesas Islands he jumped ship and lived for two months among the natives where he had an opportunity to scrutinize the differences between civilized and savage life and noted the contaminating effect of the white man on the savage. He found he could not be a good savage. After a series of stops in the South Pacific area--he would sign on a handy ship when he was ready to move on from the island where he had stopped--Melville finally reached home. He had grown up in Albany where the best families had lived well, had enjoyed all of the luxuries and conveniences of life, and now his rapid initiation into the contrast between the conspicuous waste of the aristocracy and the acute poverty of the masses of people gave him much to ponder as to the theory and practice of democracy in the United States. He had his experience with the savages to consider, experiences which made him wonder whether all of the pretensions of civilization might be no better grounded than those on which the French and English missionaries had based their attempts to convert the Polynesians while actually preparing for their ruin at the hands of a predatory commerce. These experiences combined to make Melville a skeptic, yet a skeptic with a religious and philosophical bias that would not let him rest, that drove him further and further into speculation as to the nature of good and evil, the existence of God, farther in this respect than many of his less thoughtful contemporaries had gone.

In his first books, Melville capitalized on his travel experiences. After all, in his day, few people had visited the out-of-the-way places of the world. Typee, often subtitled Life Among the Cannibals, was his first such book. His second was Omoo. Then he tried a potboiler (he needed money to support his wife and first child) and drew upon the experiences of his initial navy adventure to produce Redburn. White Jacket, again based on his experiences as a sailor, followed soon after. The one area of his sea experiences which he had not yet exploited was his experience aboard a whaler.



Moby Dick was published in the fall of 1851, and Hawthorne exclaimed to a mutual friend, "What a book Melville has written!" and sent Melville an appreciative letter. Melville and Hawthorne had been friends for some months when Melville's great story of a whale was published, and during the valuable months of 1850-1851, they enjoyed friendly meetings at each other's homes. On one occasion Hawthorne recorded that the two men "talked of time and eternity, and book and publishers and all possible and impossible matters until far into the night." Hawthorne, whose successful Scarlet Letter had recently appeared, not only encouraged Melville to be the writer he became in Moby Dick; he also undoubtedly influenced Melville's style and content in certain definite ways: Hawthorne was to Melville, among other things, an instructor in allegory; he was also an instructor in the problem of evil. Melville, like Hawthorne, became more and more concerned, the longer he lived, with the contradictory aspects of man's nature, with the conflicts between good and evil, with man's ungodlike qualities and his coexisting godlikeness--with the ungodlike character of the Gods men believed in, and, finally, with the very question of the existence of God. Melville could in no sense rest content with the kind of truth that was to be found in science; the questions that he had to answer had come down from an older heritage, had been the fundamental questions in Puritan theology: what is man and why does he behave as he does? Is there a God and what does he expect of men? He knew first-hand that nature could be brutal rather than kind; that the theologian's argument that evil was allowed to exist only by providence did not eliminate his experience of evil's dominion; that men were terrible beings and, yet, that terrifying consequences attached to an individual's separation from his fellows--to his loneliness. Perhaps the one thing that could redeem this wolfish world was sympathy with another human being; perhaps, if the hero of Moby Dick is a normative hero, only egoistic defiance and self-assertion can survive in it. In any case, Melville, for all of his revolt from Calvinism, continued to be absorbed with its problems.

In Melville's later life, one of the thorns of his later life was that only his first two travel books sold--books which gave him the label of "the man who had lived with the cannibals." Few people were interested in his greatest book, Moby Dick; fewer yet in an almost equally fine book, Pierre. Hawthorne had attempted to get his friend an ambassadorial post to relieve his financial need, but failed. The combination of his having a family to support, a very small income, and little in the way of popular esteem to sustain him brought on sickness, the arresting of his powers as a writer, and, finally, death. Ironical it is that, of all the major authors in America, the bitter Melville should be so horribly neglected, a man whose true worth was not really discovered until long after his death--until 1924, when American critics began to read his books and to discover their greatness.

Billy Budd, Foretopman, was not published until 1924. It furnishes a comprehensive restatement of the chief themes and symbols with which Melville had been concerned so long and each of which had been treated in his novels preceding Billy Budd. It is an unfinished novel, and that makes the problem of interpretation both fascinating and difficult.

As you read the novel, you will find it useful to have in mind the ideas of the tenth grade Leader and the Group unit, particularly Machiavelli, Locke and Jefferson.



## Study Guide Questions:

A. Preface: The Nature of Revolution.

1. Melville sees the French Revolution in two lights: first as the "rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs," and second, as "one more oppressive than the kings." How does Melville view the two mutinies within the English Navy?
2. What is the result of revolution? in France? in the English Navy?

B. Billy Joins the Indomitable (Chapter 1).

1. Describe the "Handsome Sailor." What characteristics of the Handsome Sailor apply to Billy?
2. Does Billy object to his impressment on the "Indomitable"? What does "Indomitable" mean?
3. What is the name of Captain Graveling's ship? Where have you met this name before?
4. "Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum." What is the action? Why does Billy "breach" naval decorum?

C. Billy Budd (Chapter 2).

1. Does Billy notice the change when he goes from the "Rights" to the "Indomitable"? What change is there?
2. Where was Billy born? Who were his parents?
3. What is "natural" and "primitive" about Billy's character?
4. Melville compares Billy to Hercules and to Adam before the Fall; he is perfect--except for what? Why does Billy have this one imperfection?

D. The Great Mutiny (Chapter 3).

1. Compare Melville's view of the Nore Mutiny as presented here with the description of mutiny in the Preface.
2. What do you feel is Melville's final judgment on the Great Mutiny? You might look closely at the metaphors and analogies Melville uses to describe and define the mutiny.

E. Nelson (Chapters 4 and 5).

1. In Chapter 4, two judgments are made about Nelson's deeds. One by Tennyson and one by the "Benthamites of war." Outline these two views. Which does Melville favor, if either?
2. Why was impressment necessary even after the Great Mutiny?
3. Why was Nelson ordered to shift his pennant from the "Captain" to the "Theseus"? In what year did this take place? Might these two chapters have any bearing on the main story of Billy Budd?

F. Captain Vere (Chapters 6 and 7).

1. Is there any evidence of mutiny on Vere's ship when Billy first comes aboard?
2. Why is Vere called "Starry Vere"?
3. What type of man is Captain Vere? How does he dress? What are his mannerisms? What does he read? What is his philosophy?

4. What are Vere's thoughts on the Revolution?
5. What do his officers mean when they describe Vere as "the King's yarn in a coil of navy yarn"?
6. Now that you have a picture of both Vere and Nelson, compare the two commanders. It might be useful to begin by calling Vere the "Benthamite of war" and Nelson the "poet of war."

G. John Claggart, Master-at-arms (Chapter 8).

1. What are Claggart's duties aboard ship?
2. Name Claggart's most prominent physical characteristics. How do they comment on his moral characteristics?
3. What similarities do you find between the careers of Billy and Claggart?
4. What does Melville-the-narrator think of Napoleon? Why is this opinion so prominent in a chapter concerning Claggart?
5. Why is Claggart's position aboard ship so powerful and influential?

H. Dansker (Chapter 9).

1. Why is Billy so "punctilious in duty"?
2. Why is Dansker called "Board-her-in-the smoke"?
3. Why do you suppose Dansker calls Billy "Baby Budd"?
4. What is Dansker's "leading characteristic"?

I. Discussion Questions (Chapters 1-9).

Like The Scarlet Letter, Billy Budd is a highly allusive work. Each character and each action reminds the author of another character or event. The event alluded to defines the meaning of the events in Melville's story and extends the literal into the moral, as in The Scarlet Letter (see discussion questions for "Act I" of The Scarlet Letter and review the three levels of symbolism). Let us take John Claggart as one example. From the first mention of Claggart, Melville begins to define his moral as well as physical nature: "The face was a notable one; the features all except the chin clearly cut as those on a Greek Medallion." He is Greek, rational, cold, but with a flaw, a large chin--"the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the prints of the Rev. Titus Oates, the historic deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot." Tecumseh "betrayed" the Americans and fought for the British in the War of 1812, and Titus Oates has been, to the English and American, the very symbol of deceit, fraud and egotism. These two allusions modify the moral character of Claggart as well as define his physical characteristics. The physical is always a clue to the moral in Hawthorne and Melville, for example: "His brow was the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; silken jet curls partly clustering over it making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber skin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old." His brow suggests intelligence and his very color alludes to the pallor of Satan in Paradise Lost. By now you should be able to see the definite connection between Claggart and Chillingworth of The Scarlet Letter: both are pale, both envious, both intellectual, and both commit a sin

against the human heart. The following quotation of Melville's description of Claggart might as easily fit Chillingworth: "The complexion, singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood." As we continue in *Billy Budd* we learn that this abnormality is one of the soul as well as of the blood.

Thus far we have been discussing the literal and moral symbolism of Claggart's character; let us look at the social symbolism, a very important level in *Billy Budd*. Claggart's background is, like Billy's, unknown but unlike Billy there is a slight touch of the autocratic in his manners and his speech. We can agree that he has a shady background--there is a suggestion of a swindle, a suggestion of French aristocracy, a suggestion of moral decay. Claggart has worked his way up to the highest enlisted rank by being obedient and showing a "constitutional sobriety" capped "by a certain austere patriotism." His police duty aboard ship allows him to see into the lives of all its members and to have more influence than anyone on the ship: "His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the chief's control, capable when astutely worked through his understrappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort, if nothing worse, of any of the sea commonality." His social position aboard ship allows for a morally corrupt man to influence and possibly to ruin an entire structure of discipline. The position of master-at-arms is a necessary one, but it allows one individual to exploit society; the post demands a just man, but here we have Satan himself.

With the above discussion in mind, discuss the characters of Billy and Captain Vere. You will notice that very little "happens" in the terms of plot movement. The characters and their moral dimensions will determine the action later in the novel--much the same technique of organization used by Hawthorne. Answer the following discussion questions concerning Billy, Vere, and Claggart.

1. List and comment upon the metaphors Melville uses to describe Billy in Chapter 2. Notice that similar metaphors are used to describe Claggart and Billy. What are the differences?
2. We have seen that Claggart is almost "perfect" evil, at least pure evil. Is Billy "perfect" or pure good? If not, why not?
3. Throughout the study guide questions you have been asked to state Melville's ideas concerning the French Revolution and the Great Mutiny. Review your answers to these questions and make a final statement concerning Melville's judgment on revolution.
4. List and comment upon the metaphors Melville uses to describe Captain Vere in Chapters 7 and 8. Support your comments by asking yourself, Is Vere a good officer? What are Vere's ideas concerning revolution? How do they compare with Melville's explicit statements--those which you discussed in question 3?
5. At first all the talk of revolution and mutiny seems to be extra baggage in this novel and at times seems boring and unnecessary for the forward movement of the action. But the basic characters of Billy, Vere and Claggart are all related to the doctrines of



revolution--notice that Billy is impressed from "The Rights of Man" a ship named after Paine's important statement about the Revolution. How does Billy's character relate to the "Rights of Man"? How does Vere's? The following quotation from Paine's work The Rights of Man ["On the Nature and Origin of Right"] should help you organize an answer. Notice that Paine makes a distinction between "natural" rights and "civil" rights; perhaps you might divide Vere and Billy along these lines.

Natural rights are those which always appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind, and also all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the rights of others. Civil rights are those which appertain to man in right of his being a member of society. Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual, but to which his individual power is not, in all cases, sufficiently competent.

J. Billy and Claggart (Chapter 10).

1. What is Claggart's reaction to the spilled soup? Would his reaction be the same if someone besides Billy spilled the soup?
2. How does Claggart's behavior confirm Melville's earlier description of him?

K. Natural Depravity (Chapters 11 and 12).

1. What must one do before he can understand Claggart's soul? Why?
2. What is "natural depravity"? According to Melville natural depravity has been associated with two philosophies--what are they?
3. What is the "cause" of natural depravity?
4. How does Melville's discussion of natural depravity relate to Claggart?
5. What is the purpose of the rather puzzling Chapter entitled "Lawyer, Expert, Clergy--an Episode"?

L. Claggart: "Pale ire, envy, and despair" (Chapters 13 and 14).

1. What first moved Claggart against Billy? What are the motivations for Claggart's initial hatred of Billy?
2. Melville remarks that only one man beside Claggart had the intelligence to understand the innocence of Billy. Who is that other man? If you can't answer this question yet, keep it in mind while you read the remainder of the novel.
3. Why is Claggart glad that Billy spilled the soup?

M. Discussion Questions (Chapters 10-14).

Chapters 1-9 are detailed accounts of the major actors in Billy Bud and Chapters 10-14 record the first confrontation of two of the actors, a confrontation that seems quite simple on the literal level--Billy spills a bowl of soup. But Melville uses this simple incident to explore



the moral distance that separates Billy and Claggart. This moral distance is quite similar to the distance between Satan and God in Paradise Lost; in fact, Melville heads his chapter on Claggart with a quotation from Milton. This explicit allusion helps define the moral world of the novel but it does not mean that Claggart equals Satan and Billy equals God--this would be a far too simple answer for a complex work. With this warning in mind, compare the descriptions of Claggart's motivations with those of Satan's in Paradise Lost. Satan is about to enter Eden:

"All hope excluded thus, behold, instead  
of us,\* outcast, exiled, his\* new delight, \*"us"= the fallen  
Mankind, created, and for him this world! angel's whom Satan  
So farewell hope, and, with hope, farewell is addressing.  
fear,  
Farewell remorse! All good to me is lost; \*"his"=God's  
Evil, be thou my good: by thee at least  
Divided empire with Heaven's King I hold,  
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;  
As Man ere long, and this new World, shall know."

Thus while he spoke, each passion dimmed his face,  
Thrice changed with pale--ire, envy, and despair;  
Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed  
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld:  
For heavenly minds from such distempers foul  
Are ever clear. Whereof he soon aware  
Each perturbation smoothed with outward calm,  
Artificer of fraud; and was the first  
That practises falsehood under saintly show,  
Deep malice to conceal, couched with revenge  
(Paradise Lost, Book IV, ll. 105-123)

N. The Plot against Billy (Chapters 15-18).

1. Why does Billy stutter when he reprimands the afterguardsman for suggesting mutiny?
2. What is Billy's reaction to the intrigue, both in answering the afterguardsmen and later?
3. Why do you suppose Billy fails to report the afterguardsman? Might it have anything to do with the character of the afterguardsman?
4. Why doesn't Dansker report the incident after Billy tells him about it?
5. Melville gives different characteristics to the landsman and seaman. What are the differences? Which is Claggart? Which is Billy?
6. Describe Claggart when he meets Billy on the upper gun deck. Does this description remind you of previous descriptions of Claggart? Which chapter?
7. What is Billy's "blinder" so he can not see through the plots of Claggart?

O. Claggart and Captain Vere (Chapter 19).

1. Why was the "Indomitable" allowed to go on scouting duty?

2. What doesn't Vere like about Claggart's first speech to him? Does Vere's reply indicate that he understands Claggart's moral character?
3. Why does Vere favor Billy and dislike Claggart?
4. Why does Vere want to "test" the accuser, Claggart "struck dead by an angel of God"? (Chapter 20)
5. What change comes over Claggart as he confronts Billy in Captain Vere's cabin?
6. Where does Billy hit Claggart? What are Vere's first words? Is it significant he uses the term "boy"?
7. What does the physician think about Vere's condition?

P. Discussion Questions (Chapters 15-20).

1. Melville remarks about Billy and Claggart, "Something decisive must come of it." This remark suggests the following action is inevitable but when we seek motives we find no "real" motivation in Claggart. His motivation does not seem to be connected with the ship or its crew--there is no mutiny, nor even a threat of mutiny on board. Discuss Claggart's reason for opposition to Billy and Billy's reason for killing Claggart. You should deal with this question on the moral level--good vs. evil--rather than just the psychological or social level. A close look at your previous discussion of Billy and Claggart's characters will help you immensely.
2. The interpretation of Captain Vere's character at this point is extremely important to our final interpretation of the novel as a whole. If Vere's judgment, "the angel must hang," is correct, then the social order that Vere represents is correct in condemning Billy; but if Vere is wrong then the social order is wrong. Is the sentence, "the angel must hang" self-contradictory? How? If a man deserves to be hanged, is he an angel?

Most disagreements about Billy Budd center on the character of Vere. Discuss Vere's actions in Chapters 19 and 20 by answering the following questions.

- a. Review your answers to the Study Guide Questions for Chapter 19. What is Vere's judgment of Claggart? In Claggart we have a clearly defined and judged character (see Chapters 8 and 11). If Vere judges Claggart correctly, it is certainly a point for Vere. If he misjudges him, then Vere is that much the less.
- b. Does Vere know what will happen when he puts Claggart and Billy together? If he does, he would seem to live on the same moral plane as Billy and Claggart--i.e., he is not really "human" but pure evil or pure innocence. If he doesn't know what would happen then he is "merely human" a "Benthamite of war." You might compare Vere's ability to see the future with Danskers' (the poet, the "old Merlin"). It is quite important that you resolve this very difficult point if you want to understand this novel. If Vere is "merely" human then he represents the social order he commands and our judgment of Vere is our judgment on that order; but if Vere represents an abstraction, say the Old Testament God, then the social judgment is not as important.
- c. What is Vere's reaction to Claggart's murder? Why is he in such torment? What in past descriptions of him would lead you to

predict his torment at this time? Notice the metaphors Vere uses to describe Billy's actions.

3. Extend the discussion of Claggart's character that you started in Chapters 8, 10 and 11. List and comment upon the metaphors and allusions Melville uses to describe Claggart throughout Chapters 15-20.
4. Was Billy right or wrong when he failed to report the alleged Mutiny? Discuss the social and moral tensions on Billy to report or not to report the incident.

Q. The Physician (Chapter 21).

1. What does the physician feel Captain Vere should do about Claggart's murder?
2. Who agrees with the physician's verdict?

R. The Trial (Chapter 22).

1. Why does Vere feel that Billy must be tried at once?
2. Why is the Captain of Marines included in the drum-head court when it usually was not the custom?
3. Do the crew and Vere believe Billy was part of a mutiny?
4. Billy lies at the trial. Why? What about?
5. Vere calls the circumstances of the murder a "mystery of iniquity." What does he mean?
6. What causes Vere's hesitancy to speak as he paces before the three officers court about to prosecute Billy? Does this tell you anything about Vere's relationship to the men on the court?
7. Vere tells the court that this case "well might be referred to a jury of 'casuists.'" Who are 'casuists'?"
8. Vere uses two arguments to convince the court of Billy's guilt. The first (pp. 72-3, WSP) fails to convince them ("Hence the three men moved in their seats less convinced than agitated by the course of the argument"). The second argument does convince them. Outline the two arguments.
9. Why does Vere reject clemency suggested by the Lieutenant?
10. Melville notes a similar circumstance aboard the U. S. brig-of-war "Somers" in 1842 when the Captain of that ship was wrong. Is there any difference between the two cases? What is the similarity?

S. Vere and Billy (Chapter 23).

1. Why won't Melville relate what Vere said to Billy after the conviction?
2. What facial expression does Vere reveal to the Lieutenant as he leaves Billy?

T. Vere and his Crew (Chapter 24).

1. Describe the tone of Vere's speech to his men concerning Billy's trial.
2. Why does Vere refrain from using Billy's coming death as an explicit example of discipline to the men?



U. Billy and the Chaplain (Chapter 25).

1. What elements of description in paragraphs one and two indicate the chaplain might be entering the story? Does the description in any way judge the chaplain?
2. Why is the chaplain of little use to Billy? What is Billy's concept of death?
3. Why is it an "irruption of heretic thought" to conceive of Billy as pure innocence (last paragraph)? What is heretical about pure innocence in the Christian system?

V. The Hanging (Chapter 26).

1. What are Billy's last words? Does anyone else echo these words?
2. In what position is the ship at the moment of hanging?

W. "A digression": Science and Death (Chapter 27).

1. What's the surgeon's opinion of Billy's death? Would you call it a physical or moral opinion?
2. What is "Euthanasia"? What does the definition of this term suggest about the nature of Billy's death?

X. The Burial (Chapter 28).

1. What unusual event occurs at Billy's burial?
2. According to Captain Vere, what function does discipline serve?

Y. Discussion Questions (Chapters 21-28).

1. Vere feels that Billy's case must be tried at once; his officers feel otherwise. Is there any reason for Vere's urgency? How does this urgency relate to the Great Mutiny? To the "Indomitable"?
2. Study Guide Question 8, Chapter 22, The Trial, asked you to outline the two arguments Vere uses to convince the court Billy should be hanged. Why does the first argument fail? Why is the second argument successful? Do you feel Vere has changed the content or the form of the argument. Which argument probably states Vere's true feelings about the case?
3. The metaphors describing Billy in chains indicates that Billy has somehow changed although he is still morally innocent. (Billy wore a "white jumper and white duck trousers, each more or less soiled, dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discolored snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth.) If he has changed, how has he changed? What beside the murder itself might have produced this change? Don't take the bait completely on this question; there is a strong argument for Billy's continuing innocence, e.g., see the hanging scene and the metaphors used there.
4. Billy's blessing Vere just before his hanging and the crew's echoing Billy suggests one could argue that Vere is right. The physician's judgment of Vere's mental state suggests that one could argue that he is wrong. At this point does Melville give us a hint as to the



solution of the problem? Does the physician really understand Vere?  
Does Billy ~~know~~ truly bless Vere? ~~Why~~ How does he bless him at all?

2. Captain Vere and the Atheiste (Chapter 29).

1. Is Vere killed as a hero or as a coward? Does his ship continue on without him?
2. What were Vere's last words? Were they uttered with remorse and regret?

A1. A Newspaper Report: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."  
(Chapter 30).

1. What mistakes does the newspaper report make concerning Billy's death?
2. The facts are correct in the newspaper report. What is wrong? Perhaps the last paragraph might help you.

B1. A Ballad: "Billy in the Darbies" (Chapter 31).

1. What is "like a piece of the cross" to the sailors?
2. The Ballad seems to be just as wrong about Billy as the newspaper was about Claggart. List the mistakes the Ballad makes in regard to the character of Billy and the events themselves. If you disagree, list the truths that occur in the Ballad.

C1. General Discussion Questions.

1. The critical argument that surrounds Billy Budd centers on Captain Vere. Throughout the Study Guide Questions and Discussion Questions you have been exploring Vere's character. Review your answers and come to a final decision concerning Vere. Is Vere the martinet, the harsh disciplinarian who carries out the rules with little regard for moral right and wrong? Or is Vere the human being struggling with Good and Evil in a social system that can accept neither Good nor Evil? What is the all about being killed by the "Atheiste"? Does that relate to Ver to the Rights of Man?
2. On the surface, the following quotation from Jean Jacques Rousseau's The Social Contract fits Billy Budd quite well. Rousseau like Locke was one of the philosophic leaders of the French Revolution and greatly admired by many of the leaders of the American Revolution. How well does the following quotation apply to the character of Billy?

The passing from the state of nature [Billy] to the civil state [The "Indomitable"??] produces in a man instincting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving to his actions a moral character which they lacked before. It is then only that the voice of duty succeeds to physical impulse, and a sense of what is right, to the incitements of appetite.

3. Later in The Social Contract Rousseau makes a distinction between the private will and the public will of a civil officer. The private will must not interfere with the public action--one must not use government agencies to fill one's own pocket. In a sense, this is Vere's struggle. His private will tells him to acquit Billy, but his public will tells him "the angel must hang." Discuss these two sides of Vere's character and how they determine his actions. You might look carefully at the trial scene again for help.
4. Several minor characters judge Billy, Claggart, and Vere. Some are practical men and "Benthamites"--the physician, the surgeon, the Purser, the newspaper reporter; others are poetical men, Tennyson, Nelson, Dansker, the Ballad maker. Discuss each group's judgment on the main characters. Do not assume one group is absolutely correct; as we have seen the newspaper and the ballad are right and wrong, each in its own way.
5. Between such complex works as The Scarlet Letter and Billy Budd there are many points of contact but few conclusive answers. We may try to connect them, however, with some hope of illumination. Answer the following questions concerning the two works.
  - a. Both Billy Budd and The Scarlet Letter contain closed societies, societies that restrict its members. Compare the societies in the two novels: their power structures, their means of justice, their theological groundings, the pressure of the society on the individual who transgresses the laws. Remember that Boston in The Scarlet Letter was a union of religion and law. Is this true aboard the "Indomitable"?
  - b. Both novels are concerned with sin and isolation. You should be familiar with the isolation produced by sin in Hawthorne; but does violation of rules isolate the individual in Billy Budd? Notice that this question relates to "a." Billy and Hester violate rules and are isolated, but the rules are quite different in each novel. Discuss the differing types of isolation in The Scarlet Letter and in Billy Budd. Consider other characters beside Hester and Billy.
  - c. Compare the structure of both novels. You should consider the following points:
    - (1) Allegorical characters.
    - (2) Dramatic scenes.
    - (3) The three levels of symbolism.
    - (4) Action governed by character traits.
    - (5) Allusions and their function--as description and as definition.

### III. Huckleberry Finn

#### Introduction:

We have discussed The Scarlet Letter in terms of "magic circles" and circles of guilt and penance, and the world, the ship, of Billy Budd as closed world. The figure of the circle may again be helpful for discussing Huckleberry Finn, for Huck and Jim lived in a kind of isolation from

other people. They are physically isolated from society by their raft and the river; they are morally isolated from society, by the disparity between their own values and society's. This is not to say, however, that their circle is unchangeably closed; for the Duke and the Dauphin are admitted to the raft, and Huck and Jim are introduced to society on the shore. The conflicts of Huck and Jim with people on shore, with the Duke and the Dauphin, and with misfortunes of weather, such as the fog, help create, of course, the adventure of Huckleberry Finn. But more important than the obvious adventure of the narrative is the moral conflict with civilization and the satire which can be expressed through Huck's developing attitude toward Jim.

The journey, the adventure, the narration of the story by a young boy of low degree, Huck's separation from society, and the judgment of the society on shore, all these, suggest that Huckleberry Finn is patterned after the picaresque novel popular in Western Europe from the sixteenth and on through the eighteenth century. The picaresque novel is a chronicle, usually autobiographical, of the adventures of a person of low class and something of a rascal, who lives by his wits.<sup>3</sup> The picaresque novel, because it presents a series of thrilling incidents, is episodic and usually lacks formal plot structure: the central character, through the nature of his various pranks and predicaments, and by virtue of his associations with people of all kinds, affords the author an opportunity for social satire. What society does to the picaro tells us what is wrong with society. Twain is within this tradition: Huck is young, of low birth, without family, and without social responsibility. Time and again his native ingenuity and inventiveness save him from imprisonment, injury, and even destruction. That Huckleberry Finn lacks plot structure is clear: Huck moves from episode to episode, approaching an adventure and leaving it almost as the current of the river wills. This is not to say, however, that the novel lacks theme or development; for the adventures of Huck have their effect on his growth and concurrently direct a satire of increasing intensity against civilization, or against certain forms of civilization. In discussing this book you should concern yourself with the question of whether Mark Twain is attacking civilization in general or simply the civilization of the South in pre-civil war days.

Like Hester and Dimmesdale, Huck and Jim are seeking freedom; but unlike them they seek freedom from civilization in general or from certain civilizations--not from personal guilt: for Huck freedom from the "imprisonment" of Pap and Miss Watson or from community-life-in-general, for Jim freedom from servitude to certain people or servitude-in-general. Evil resides in the innate brutality of certain civilized men or, perhaps, of human civilization according to its very character; and it is from one of these evils that Huck and Jim are escaping: either the brutality of man or that of civilization. That Huck and Jim must turn to the river as a route to freedom suggests that in the wild the goodness of man has the

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<sup>3</sup> If you studied the "Journey Novel Hero: The Picaro" in the eighth grade, you already know what the Picaresque Novel is.



opportunity, at least, of predominating. The river serves as a place of physical separation from society on shore, as a moving road for the journey and a figure for the wild. But as you read the book consider also whether the river may symbolize the God-filled nature which Emerson and Thoreau describe or whether it is a less mystical and less sympathetic force. Consider whether the destructive force of the river is a force which Emerson and Thoreau find in nature. The river almost drowns Huck: it separates him from Jim; but it also saves him time and again from the dangers on shore. The river, we may see as a neutral force in Huck's life. Is it? Some people say that Huck turns not from civilization to nature, as represented by the river, so much as from civilization to human nature. Does he? It is certain that Huck turns to Jim and Jim is not a neutral force in Huck's life. Is Jim rather than the river the only source in the novel of natural decency?

Some critics say that it is not society, in the broad sense of that word, that Huck is escaping, but Calvinistic society with its peculiar religious bias; for Huck and Jim, after all, comprise a society. Indeed, it may be the playing off of the society of the raft against Calvinistic society at large that holds the conscience of Huck in the balance and finally accounts for Huck's full rejection of civilization. Jim is hereby a foil to civilization. For Jim there is no question of what is right or wrong, or is there? Does Jim like Huck have to learn a new system of values? True, he must have freedom; but his hierarchy of values may be clearly established; and when Huck is in trouble, or when the life of Tom Sawyer is at stake, we must ask why Jim willingly sacrifices his freedom. Huck, clearly, has no very clear order of values; he must struggle with his conscience on almost every major decision. As early as Chapter IV Huck wavers between civilization and life with Pap in the woods: "I was getting sort of used to the widow's ways, too, and they warn't so raspy on me." "I liked the old ways best, but I was getting so I liked the new ones, too, a little bit."

We must look very carefully to Huck's relationship to Jim for it seems that it is there that his conscience is finally forced in the direction of its final development. Some critics have said that Huck's relationship to the river is what makes him take the attitude he does toward Jim. Others have said that it is his rebellion against white Calvinist society which does this and still others have said it is Jim's own inner goodness which brings him to move in a new direction. Huck's acceptance of Jim as a free human being may seem to require that he reject what his white civilization has taught him, that he reject what he regards as the opinion of "decent" society. Jim's presence serves as a temptation to Huck to return to "decency" by surrendering Jim to society.

Huck's final temptation shows clearly his realization that in the act of abetting Jim he may be losing not only his standing as a citizen but his soul as well. However, that Huck refuses decent society may be an indictment of Huck rather than an indictment of society. Not his crime, but his sin now seems enormous: "I most dropped in the tracks, I was so scared." His only recourse is an appeal to the final Authority. He tries to pray but his "heart warn't right"; it is still loyal to Jim. To make the heart right, he composes a letter to Miss Watson telling her where she may find Jim. With the letter before him, however, his memory releases a series of



images of Jim's kindnesses toward him. Trembling in the intensity of his conflict between his love for the slave and his anxiety to save his soul, he finally says to himself, "All right, then, I'll go to hell," and tears up the letter. Twain's point, of course, may be that Huck's "heart" is exactly right; what "warn't right" may be the civilization that preaches piety and practices inhumanity. The point which the student has to ask himself is what Twain is saying through this scene. Is he saying that Huck is endangering his soul by supporting Jim? Is he saying that Huck has misunderstood religious teaching in thinking that he endangers his soul by supporting Jim? Or, is he saying that the system which teaches a man that he endangers his soul by an act of humanity is no valid system at all?

Huck's last words are that "I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before." Are we to take "civilizing" to mean training in inhumanity, injustice, hypocrisy, and general moral ugliness; are we to take it as referring to the weakness of Calvinistic Southern society, or as meaning only the discomforts of new shoes or a starched collar which Huck may dislike. Huck's loneliness may be the inescapable result of having rejected a corrupt civilization or simply the result of giving up civilization's good comfort. Which is it?

#### Study Guide Questions: Chapter 1

1. Who was Moses? What is his story? Are there any parallels between Huck and Moses?
2. What is suggested by Tom Sawyer telling Huck he could join Tom's "band of robbers" if he "would go back to the widow and be respectable"? What values are implicit in this statement? What does Tom mean by "respectable"?
3. How is Huck's preference for food where "things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and things go better," instead of the widow's food ("everything was cooked by itself"), related to the Widow's refusing Huck snuff while taking it herself?
4. Huck says he doesn't want heaven if the Widow is there. Where in the novel does he reject heaven again?
5. How is the loneliness Huck feels (p. 3) related to Moses and the bulrushes? Why is Huck lonely anyway? Doesn't he have family and friends?
6. Why does Twain have Huck go through superstitious acts to ward off bad luck (after killing the spider) when Huck says he "hadn't no confidence in it"?

#### Chapter 2:

1. What mood is achieved by having Tom appear below Huck's window during Huck's loneliness?
2. Team steals three candles and leaves 5 cents. What is suggested about Tom's morality?
3. What is the discussion of Negro superstition about (pp. 5-6)? Why is it there? Does it have a counterpart in the white man's behavior?

4. Where does Tom get his information about robbers and highway men? Why does Twain emphasize this point?
5. Why does Twain have the boys conclude "It would be wicked to rob and murder on Sunday"?

### Chapter 3:

1. Why are Huck's episodes with Miss Watson concerning Providence and his A-rab ambush in the same chapter? How are the two incidents related?
2. What is the paragraph about the drowned man doing in this chapter?

### Chapter 4:

1. Chapter 3 is concerned, in part, with Miss Watson's Providence. What relation does "The Hair-ball Oracle" bear to this matter?
2. Providence, the lamp and the ring, and the hair-ball are all concerns of Huck's. Why?
3. What tense does Huck use to tell his story?
4. How does the fact that Huck was "getting so he liked the Widow's ways, a little bit" serve to shape his future actions?

### Chapter 5:

1. What attitude of Twain's toward human depravity does "A New Life" suggest?
2. In what ways does the judge's attempt to reform Pap parallel Miss Watson's attempts to reform Huck? In what ways are Pap and Huck alike?
3. Why can the chapter title "A New Life" be said to be ironical?
4. What major human frailty does Pap represent in this chapter? Does Miss Watson have any human frailties? Are Miss Watson and Pap comparable in any way?

### Chapter 6:

1. Why should Pap, in his drunkenness, call Huck the "Angel of Death"? Who is the Death Angel? What is his function?
2. What is Pap's view of the role of government in the affairs of man?
3. Huck is free of society when he is with Pap, but he is still not pleased. Why? Does this suggest that Huck must get away from more than just civilization? His "choice" is between the town and the woods and he escapes both. What freedom does he desire? What indirect comment does Twain make here on the nature of Man?

### Chapter 7:

1. The rising June river brings a canoe to Huck and hence a route of escape. Would you describe the river as benevolent, indifferent, random? Why?
2. Why does Huck make such elaborate plans for his escape from the cabin? Why doesn't he simply leave? Are his elaborate plans anything like Tom Sawyer's for freeing Jim from the Phelps?
3. What is the effect of Huck's description of the sky and the river as he rests in the canoe (p. 30)? Recall that Huck has now achieved the freedom from Pap and civilization he wants. What kind of perspective

does Huck give us of the conversation of the men on the ferry-landing?  
What is the description doing here?

4. Why does Twain choose to have Huck escape Pap and civilization by going off down the river, rather than escaping on foot through Illinois?

#### Chapter 8:

1. Why should Huck want to be thought dead? In what sense is he dead?
2. Why does Huck bother to tell us about his friends coming on the ferry to look for his body?
3. Why is Huck glad to see Jim? What do Huck and Jim have in common?
4. Why does Jim repeat to Huck "But you got a gun, hain't you?" "But you got a gun. Oh, yes, you got a gun" (pp. 36-37)?
5. Why does Twain have Jim repeat for Huck his plan for and eventual escape to Jackson Island?
6. What do you make of Huck's statement, "Jim said bees wouldn't sting idiots; but I didn't believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn't sting me" (p. 40)?
7. In Chapter 8 Jim discusses some Negro superstitions and his involvement with them. Can you find parallels to Huck's experience?

#### Chapter 9:

1. Why does Jim not tell Huck that the body in the death house is Pap's?
2. Where else have you encountered the word "death" in connection with Pap?
3. On pages 9, 46, and 63 are interludes in which Huck describes nature. What are they doing here? Do they shape your image of Huck in any way?

#### Chapter 10:

1. Huck leaves a dead rattler in Jim's bed. In what way does this prefigure a later incident? Why does Huck throw the snakes in the bushes?

#### Chapter 11:

1. Huck's discovery that men are coming to Jackson Island to search for Jim sets the pair off down the river. Is this another example of Huck's luck? Or is it simply Twain's way of getting the "adventure" started?

#### Chapter 12:

1. Huck plans that if they are seen in the river they will head for the Illinois bank. Why the Illinois side and not the Missouri?
2. Huck says, he "didn't care what was the reason they didn't get us so long as they didn't." Has there been any indication up to this chapter that Huck's concern is for more than simply himself?
3. What moral yardstick do Huck and Jim use to decide what to "borrow" and what not to "borrow"?
4. Frequently, as in this chapter, Huck refers admiringly to Tom Sawyer's sense of adventure. Does Huck hold Tom as some kind of hero? Does Twain?

## Chapter 13:

1. Huck develops a morality that permits stealing watermelons, but not crab apples. Does he make a similar value judgment when he decides to save the lives of the men on the Walter Scott?
2. The chapter is entitled "Honest Loot from the Walter Scott." In what sense is the loot "honest"?
3. Who is Walter Scott?

## Chapter 14:

1. Why is the question of Solomon's wisdom raised here? Who was Solomon?
2. How does Huck understand the story of Solomon? How does Jim? Does his degree of sophistication here square with his apparent naivete about Providence as Miss Watson explains it to him?
3. Huck and Jim argue about Solomon and about French. What effect does this argument have on your attitude about Jim?

## Chapter 15:

1. Why is it so important that Jim and Huck know when they get to Cairo? Where is Cairo?
2. What function does the heavy fog in this chapter serve?
3. Who remains with the raft this time? Who ordinarily stays with the raft?
4. Who is lost in the fog--Huck or Jim?
5. What kind of blindness does Huck display after he finds Jim?
6. How do Huck and Jim find each other?
7. Why is Jim so offended by Huck's trick? Isn't Jim rather stupid to be so offended?

## Chapter 16:

1. What is Huck's struggle in this chapter?
2. Huck indicates that one element of the struggle is his "Conscience." What is the other element? Does Huck's "Conscience" represent his set of values? Whose?
3. Where might Huck have heard "Give a nigger an inch and he'll take a mile"?
4. Huck responds to the two boatmen who inquire about passengers on the raft: "He's white." Is this simply a lie to save Jim? Could "white" have more than one meaning?
5. Huck lies to both the ferry man and the boatmen hunting slaves. What finally motivates the actions of each? What is similar in each case? Do the boatmen leave Huck forty dollars out of generosity?
6. What's the effect of the collision with the steamboat?

## Chapters 17-18:

1. Why does Twain choose the names "Grangerford" and "Shepherdson" for the feuding families? Can you think of any reason for the names having an equal number of syllables?
2. Who started the feud?
3. What's Buck's response to Huck's judgment that Baldy Shepherdson was a coward?



4. What may be said to be the primary motivation for the feud?
5. Twain takes a great deal of time to describe the "style" of the Grangerford house. What does the house look like inside? Do you admire the "decor," or not? Does Huck admire it?
6. Huck says at the beginning of Chapter 18, "Col. Grangerford was a gentleman...." What are the marks of a gentleman that Huck lists? Is Col. Grangerford a gentle man?
7. What is Emmeline's favorite preoccupation? What is her predominant disposition?
8. Huck, after reciting the "Ode to Stephen Dowling Bots, Dec'd," says if Emmeline "could make poetry like that before she was fourteen, there ain't no telling what she could 'a' done by and by." Apparently Huck likes the poem. Do you? Does Twain?
9. How does the death of Bots compare with death in chapter 18?
10. Why did Harney Shepherdson ride away and not kill Buck?
11. What is Huck's rather implicit judgment of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress? Do you know anything about Bunyan's religious conviction?
12. Why does Twain choose to call young Grangerford "Buck"? How old is Buck?
13. Emmeline's pictures give Huck the "fan-tods." But he forces himself to like her because he likes the family so well. He "warn't going to let anything come between [him and the family]." Yet near the end of Chapter 18, Huck says, "I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night to see such things." Has his judgment of the Grangerfords changed? What disparity of values is Huck faced with?
14. What is the subject of Sunday's sermon? Why is the subject of "prefore-ordination" particularly relevant to these parishioners? Is Twain's use of the word "preforeordination" such that he has a reverent or irreverent attitude for the doctrine of predestination?

#### Chapter 19:

1. Between Huck's separation from the Grangerfords and the coming of the Duke and Dauphin are about four pages of description of Huck and Jim's rather idle and carefree life on the raft. What are these paragraphs doing here?
2. Why doesn't Huck charge the Duke and Dauphin with their fraud?

#### Chapter 20:

1. How does Huck explain Jim to the "royalty"?
2. What does the king inadvertently reveal about the people at the Parkville camp meeting?
3. At this point Huck has not yet judged the Duke and the Dauphin, except to say they are frauds. What has Jim come to think about them?

#### Chapter 21:

1. Why does the Duke address the Dauphin as "Capet"?
2. Why does Twain have the Duke botch Shakespeare so badly?
3. Where does the Duke hold the first show in Bricksville?
4. What kind of town is Bricksville? Is it likely that the town has a chamber of commerce?
5. What is the river doing to Bricksville?

6. What makes Sherburn different from the rest of the citizens of Bricks-ville?
7. What does the behavior of the crowd around the dead Boggs suggest of their needs? For example, one of those crowding in to get a look says, "Say, now, you've looked enough, you fellows; 'tain't right and 'taint fair for you to stay thar all the time, and never give nobody a chance; other folks has their rights as well as you."

#### Chapter 22:

1. The crowd moves toward Sherburn's house and up to the fence. But Sherburn steps out and, Huck says, "the wave sucked back." How does this image reinforce Twain's description of the crowd? Why is the crowd a "wave"? Why did it "suck"?
2. What does Huck mean when he says Sherburn's laugh was the "kind that makes you feel like you're eating bread with sand in it"? What feeling is that?
3. In his speech to the crowd Sherburn discriminates between "you" and "man." Who is "you"? Who is "man"?
4. What is Sherburn's opinion of mankind? Do we have any signs as to what is Huck's opinion of Sherburn? Twain's opinion of Sherburn?
5. How does Huck justify sneaking into the circus?
6. Why are the attempted lynching and the circus included in the same chapter? Are the events similar in any way?
7. Can you separate Huck's responses to the circus from the crowd's responses to the circus?
8. What most important change does the Duke make in their poster for the second night of their show?

#### Chapter 23:

1. Why does the audience at "the Royal Nonesuch" say they've been "sold"? What is it to "sell" or to be "sold"?
2. Huck describes kings as a "mighty ornery lot." Earlier he calls the town loafers in Bricksville "a mighty ornery lot." What is the effect of this indictment?
3. Why does Twain end this chapter with Jim's story of "'Po' little 'lizabeth"?

#### Chapter 24:

1. The King says he will "trust in Providence to lead him the profitable way." Where else has Providence been discussed? Is this the same Providence?
2. Why does Twain follow the story of Jim's "'Po little 'lizabeth' with the Duke and the Dauphin's fraud in which the Duke must impersonate a "deef and dumb person"?
3. Why should the hare-lip give herself to "good works"?
4. Huck ends this chapter with the remark that the Duke and the Dauphin's mourning for the dead tanner "was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race." Why should their acts make Huck ashamed of the race as a whole? Surely they are not representative of the race. Or have they given Huck some insight into the nature of the race? Does Twain seem to believe in some version of the doctrine of original sin?

## Chapter 25:

1. Huck says of the scene of mourning around the coffin, "I never seen anything so disgusting." Is Huck opposed to sentiment? What kind?
2. Why does Huck feel "music is a good thing"?
3. Why do the Duke and Dauphin decide to give all \$6,000 to the daughters?
4. What is humorous about the King mistaking "orgies" for "obsequies"?

## Chapter 26:

1. What makes Huck decide to try to save the girls' money?

## Chapter 27:

1. What does the corpse have over its face? Why?
2. During the funeral Huck says, "Peter was the only one that had a good thing, according to my notion." Why does he say this?
3. What actions of the Duke and Dauphin most upset the sisters and the townspeople?

## Chapter 28:

1. Why does Huck send Mary Jane to the Lothrop's?
2. How does Huck convince the hare-lip and Susan not to tell the Duke and Dauphin the truth about Mary Jane's departure?

## Chapter 29:

1. Do the doctor and lawyer believe Huck's lies about England? Hasn't Huck lied successfully before? Why are his lies failing now?
2. How does the real Harvey Wilks propose to finally decide who is the genuine brother?
3. Where, other than in this chapter, have people crowded around a dead man? What is the crowd's motivation?
4. Compare the crowd's behavior here to the crowd's behavior in Chapter 25.
5. What does the corpse have on its chest? What did Boggs have on his chest when he died?
6. Huck says that when the crowd got to the cemetery "they swarmed into the graveyard and washed over it like an overflow." Where has Huck used a similar comparison?
7. What does Huck mean when he says Mary Jane has the "most sand"?

## Chapter 30:

1. Who do the Duke and Dauphin suspect initially of having stolen the gold?

## Chapter 31:

1. How does Jim get separated from Huck this time?
2. Huck despairs when he finds Jim gone. What does he conclude is the cause of this misfortune?
3. What is the "something" inside Huck that tells him he should have gone to Sunday School?

4. Why can Huck not pray? What appears to be Twain's attitude toward prayer?
5. Huck's conscience seems cleared by the letter. But what next gets in his way? What is the nature of Jim's relationship to him that creates the conflict?
6. Between what "two things" does Huck have to decide?
7. "All right, then, I'll go to hell." What action has Huck chosen to send him to hell? Return to the discussion of this scene in the introduction and try to formulate an answer to the questions concerning it posed in the introduction.

#### Chapter 32:

1. At the beginning of this chapter Huck says it "was all still and Sunday-like...." What does he mean--"Sunday-like"?
2. What do you make of Huck's remark that the atmosphere "made a body wish he was dead, too, and done with it all"?
3. What does Huck say is that "loneliest sound in the world"?
4. Why has Huck gone to the Phelps?
5. Huck tells his aunt that his boat blew a cylinder-head. She asks, "anybody hurt?" "no'm, killed a nigger." "Well, its lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt." What do we make of this conversation? What is the distinction that's being made here? Does Huck accept Aunt Sally's distinction?
6. What does Huck say about Providence in this chapter?
7. Why does Huck feel he is "born again"? In what sense is he born again?

#### Chapter 33:

1. Why does Tom Sawyer not object to Huck's plan to free Jim?
2. Huck says, "Tom fell considerable in my estimation" when he agreed to help steal Jim. What does this suggest about the conflict operating in Huck? What should Tom's attitude be toward slave-stealing?
3. What is the "Southern hospitality" the Phelps offer Tom? Are they hospitable?
4. How did the Phelps' community learn about the "scandalous show"?
5. What events evoke from Huck the remark that "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another"? Why is Huck not glad to see the Duke and Dauphin get their deserved reward?
6. Huck feels "to blame" for what happens to the Duke and Dauphin. Where else has he felt guilty for what's happened to someone?

#### Chapter 34:

1. What is Huck's plan to free Jim?
2. What does Tom say is wrong with Huck's plan?
3. Why does Huck want so badly to discourage Tom from stealing Jim?
4. How does Tom take advantage of the "nigger" who is feeding Jim?

#### Chapters 35-40:

1. Why must Jim have a rope ladder?
2. Why does Tom finally decide to use a pick instead of a case-knife to dig out Jim?



3. What does Huck finally understand about Tom's demand for a case-knife?
4. When Tom's schemes won't work, what solution does Huck offer?
5. Where does Tom find a rock for Jim's prison? How do they get the rock to Jim?
6. Why does Tom want Jim to have spiders, snakes, and rats in his cell?
7. What decision must Jim make once they are free on the raft?
8. What does Huck mean when he says about Jim, "I knowed he was white inside..."

#### Chapter 41:

1. Why doesn't Huck return to the island with Jim and Tom?

#### Chapter 42:

1. How does the doctor protect Jim?
2. What argument finally sways those who want to hang Jim?
3. What does Tom reveal about Jim?

#### Chapter 43:

1. Why is Huck going to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest"? Who are the rest? What does Huck mean he's "been there before"?

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss Twain's principle of organization. Is it strictly chronological? Do any of the chapters bear more than a chronological relationship to the next? Does Huck select the materials he narrates? What material does he leave out?
2. Can you say that those values, people, and activities that Huck approves of Twain approves of? That is, are Huck's views Twain's views? At any place in the narration do you feel that Twain is speaking and not Huck? What is your evidence?
3. Huck refers to Tom Sawyer admiringly again and again throughout the novel. Late in the novel Huck says, "What a head for just a boy to have! If I had Tom Sawyer's head I wouldn't trade it off to be a duke, nor mate of a steamboat, nor clown in a circus, nor nothing I can think of." Time and again he refers to Tom's great sense of adventure. If Huck has a hero, he would seem to be Tom. Indeed, the last nine chapters are given over to Tom's ingenuity. Do you believe Tom is worthy of emulation? Does Twain? Can you find evidence that Huck finally must reject Tom? What could lead him to reject Tom? Try putting Tom in Huck's place in the various adventures down the river.
4. Discuss the theme of the overreacher in the Duke and the Dauphin. Are they like Dr. Faustus (Grade 10)? Icarus?
5. Huck's actions continually take him away from people. Indeed his last remark is that he will go to the territory "ahead of the rest." Does Huck want to be alone?
6. When Huck discovers that he is Tom Sawyer at the Phelps, he says he felt "born again." Does the theme of rebirth recur in the novel? What is a major symbol of birth in the novel?
7. Are there any sources of absolute goodness in the novel?

8. Discuss the various ways Providence operates in the novel. For example, what do we make of the "good luck" that takes Jim to the Phelps? Is the author simply manipulating events for the sake of the "story"? Or is something else operating in the lives of Jim and Huck?
9. Are any old people in the novel good people? Discuss reasons for their absence or presence.
10. What do you suppose Huck has learned if anything? What evidence is there of his learning?
11. What comment is made on the behavior of people in a crowd at Parkville and Bricksville?
12. Discuss Huck's sense of guilt or responsibility for the difficulties of several people such as Buck, the robbers on the Walter Scott, Jim, the Duke and the Dauphin, and Miss Watson. Why should Huck feel responsibility for them?
13. Discuss the relationship of Mercy and Justice in Southern Society. When are they exemplified?
14. Now go back to the introductory discussion and try to answer the questions which we posed there concerning what Twain is trying to tell us about the relationship between man and nature, on the one hand, and organized religion and society, on the other. Compare Twain's views with those of Hawthorne and Melville, which you have described previously.

#### IV. The Unvanquished

Faulkner in his novels creates a mythical county in northern Mississippi in the region between the bottoms and the hills--the bottoms covered with rich loam and the hills with clay and scrubby pine; he fills this county with three kinds of people: the urbanites of Faulkner's world, the small businessmen and craftsmen who live in Jefferson, the county seat of Yoknapatawpha county, and the rural people who fall into two classifications--the valley people (including the great plantation owners who live as semi-feudal lords, their tenants and helpers who have about the position which serfs had in John of Salisbury's world), and the hill people who are a sort of poverty stricken hill-billy class who work the red clay of the hills. This latter class is well described in the novel As I Lay Dying. Yoknapatawpha county has no cities; its society is a mingling of the primitive rural society which man has known since the beginning of time and a decayed version of feudal society which covered Europe from the Middle Ages to the demise of the ancient regime and which still covers many parts of South America. Yoknapatawpha county has 15,611 persons, and Faulkner has written over a dozen novels concerning it: The Sound and the Fury (1930), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom (1936), The Unvanquished (1938), The Wild Palms (1939), The Hamlet (1940), Go Down Moses (1940), The Town (1957), The Mansion (1959), and The Reivers (1962).

Faulkner's world is not just this one county, for it is a kind of metaphor for the South both before and after the Civil War and for the human condition as man knows sin and loneliness. Frequently the woods and wild parts of this county are treated as if they were a kind of innocent Eden ("The Bear"). The hill country area may also be presented as the home of innocent and non-possessive people as in Absalom, Absalom or it may be the home of grotesquely brutish and beast-like people as in As I Lay Dying. Usually the town and the plantation low-lands are filled with people who have

no rapport with nature and whose life is governed by greed: either a greed controlled by some kind of traditional religious or cultural code or a greed controlled by nothing. The Sartorisés, the Coldfields, the Compson's, the great aristocrats of Faulkner's novels, live the life of greed controlled by a traditional cultural or religious code; the Snopes's and the Popeyes--floaters, Northeners, rootless outsiders whose only instinct is rapacity--are governed by no codes. They only destroy. It is this Southland that Faulkner loved and hated. He spent most of his life in the obscure town of Oxford, Mississippi; but left it shortly before he died for the University of Virginia because he feared the populace--what it might do to him (because of his various and inconsistent pronouncements on racial questions).

Yoknapatawpha county's industry is agricultural, its chief products being lumber and baled cotton for the Memphis market, its people except for shopkeepers and maybe a doctor or lawyer, being largely woodsmen and farmers. The majority of Yoknapatawpha county's inhabitants live as poorly as slaves. If Faulkner resembles Twain in his concentration on rural and agrarian characters, he even more resembles Hawthorne, perhaps, in his concentration on a single locality and its people. In The Scarlet Letter, for example, we come to understand the habit of mind that informs not only Dimmesdale, but the Puritan community at large. Faulkner similarly involves us in the South. His characters have a certain value or attitude that stays with us. Many of the relationships in his work are those of the family; the relationship of father and son, of brother and sister, or grandparent and child. The relationships are usually invested with the highest degree of emotional value. Love is warm, proud, and sometimes incestuous. Hate is strong, merciless, and sometimes ennobling. But mostly Faulkner's poor are tough, enduring, as are some of his rich.

Faulkner's talents were recognized internationally with the Nobel Prize for literature. When he accepted the Nobel Prize, he made some remarks about literature which suggest the attitudes of his novels and sound much like Hawthorne ("the sanctity of the human heart"). He said that "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself. . . alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat." A writer, Faulkner said, should have "no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths, lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed--love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." Faulkner said that the end of man was not inevitable, as many had been arguing. Indeed, "Man is immortal. . . because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance"; and the aim of the writer, his works, is not to be "merely the record of man" but to be "one of the props, the pillars, to help him endure and prevail."

Much has been made, and accurately so, of Faulkner's preoccupation with man's capacity for endurance. His characters frequently demonstrate primarily the capacity to stay and to stay and to stay with jaw set and inflexible, implacable eyes in the teeth of the horror of life. But to focus only on this quality in his characters is to distort them. The Unvanquished gives you characters who endure under miserable circumstances; they endure rather stupidly, doggedly, blindly at times. In many instances their endurance can not be taken as admirable, in some cases, it may be said to lead to their destruction. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech



Faulkner does not say man's primary characteristic is his ability to endure, but rather that the writer's works should help man "endure and prevail." We must ask what Faulkner says in this novel about how man will prevail. A writer helps man to endure and to prevail.

Faulkner is a writer who gets to the heart of the matter--like Shakespeare or Melville or Hawthorne. He writes in a style altogether his own as to syntax and vocabulary, a style rich and dark and convoluted as Baroque paintings or old fashioned jazz or Beethoven quartets. He writes of man in his most savage most ludicrous attitudes--with a full cognizance of man's innate limitations (Original Sin?), his capacity for wildness of flesh and magnificence of spirit, for discipline, for enduring in suffering and for constructing--or trying to construct--out of his suffering some thing upon which to rejoice or upon which, at least, to rest. Some critics have seen Faulkner as a profoundly Christian writer; some as simply a tragic writer. Certain it is that he asks the old, religious questions which the Greek tragedians and Old Testament prophets asked.

#### Study Guide Questions:

##### A. Ambuscade

1. Who is the narrator of the story? Why is it urgent that Bayard be General Pemberton in the war game? In what way is Loosh's destruction of the woodchip pile symbolic? What smell did Bayard smell in the clothes, beard, and flesh of his father? Why does he say he knows "better now"? What does he mean now? What is John Sartoris' response to the news that Loosh said he hadn't been in Tennessee?
2. What trousers is John Sartoris wearing? Why is this important? Bayard remarks, when describing his father, that he and Ringo are twelve. Why does he repeat this? What is the effect on their perception? Why is the new pen being built in the woods? Where is the trunk buried? What is in the trunk? How is the fall of Vicksburg related to the burial of the trunk?
3. Why do Ringo and Bayard follow Loosh in the night? Why do Ringo and Bayard watch the road for two days? What distinction is made in Louvinia's questions "Do you think there's enough Yankees in the whole world to whip the white folks?" In what sense is the squad of Yankees that Bayard and Ringo arouse "the whole army"?
4. What choice is Granny forced to make? What effect may her choice have on the witnesses to her choice? What values figure most clearly in her choice? Contrast the sargeant and the colonel. Does the colonel know that Ringo and Bayard are hiding under Granny's skirts? Why does he leave them hiding? Granny offers the colonel something cool to drink. The colonel replies, "You are taxing yourself beyond mere politeness and into sheer bravado." What does he mean? What does he think of Granny? In Granny's eyes Ringo and Bayard must pay for one sin. What is it? Aren't they guilty of attempted murder? Isn't this a sin?

##### B. Retreat

1. Why does Granny decide to take the silver to Memphis? Why is it



dug up at night? Bayard says that as long as he could remember there hadn't been a "key to any door, inside or outside, about the house." What is suggested about past order and present order in the locking of the door?

2. What is the "game with rules" the McCaslin brothers play with their slaves? Why does Faulkner bother to tell us about this game? Have the brothers freed their slaves? Do they treat their slaves as equals? What attitude does Uncle Buck express about John Sartoris? Why is Granny carrying rose cuttings?
3. Granny is warned that the Yankees may use her as hostage to manipulate John Sartoris. She replies, "My experience with Yankees has evidently been different from yours. I have no reason to believe that their officers--I suppose they still have officers among them--will bother a woman and two children." What basis does Granny have for such an attitude? What happens to change her belief?
4. Why does Colonel Sartoris announce to the surrounded Yankees, "Boys, I'm John Sartoris, . . ." When Sartoris takes the Yankees, is it prisoners he wants?
5. John Sartoris asks Granny where she got horses to get home with. She replies "I borrowed them" and echoes whom? Does this suggest a change in belief in Granny?
6. Why do the Yankees burn the Sartoris mansion? What kind of war is this? Does the burning of the mansion bring any change in attitude in Granny? What is the evidence? What is our attitude toward Loosh's action? From whose set of values do you judge him? Bayard's? Your own?

#### C. Raid

1. Why will Granny not let Ringo and Bayard take the "borrowed" horses to Jefferson? Why does Granny insist on driving the horses when she goes to look for Colonel Dick?
2. In what sense are Granny and Bayard lonely? in what sense sinful?
3. Where has the lame Negress gotten the language she uses to express where she is going: "Hit's Jordan we coming to." "Jesus gonter see me that far."?
4. Why is the railroad so important to Ringo? Why is the railroad important to Bayard and to Drusilla? What does the locomotive represent in the mind of the Southerner? Why does the locomotive waste precious steam sounding its whistle? What attitude is expressed in Drusilla's statement that the Yankees "tore the track up so we couldn't do it again; they could tear the track up but they couldn't take back the fact that we had done it. They couldn't take that from us"? Is this attitude to be admired? What contrast does this story suggest between Yankee and Southern attitudes?
5. In what sense is Drusilla a girl? in what sense not? What has happened to change her? How do her attitudes about the South compare to Granny's? What does Drusilla want to fight for? Is she lonely? What, if any, is her sin?
6. What is symbolized in the Negroes' movement toward the river? Does this scene bear any relation to Drusilla's story of the railroad?
7. Why does Granny accept ten times the amount of silver, and more mules and slaves than are due her? Does the moral attitude she has

expressed earlier allow for this? Is this a sudden change in her code, or has the change been coming gradually? What does Granny mean when she says of the Yankees who gave her the mules, "I tried to tell them better. You and Ringo heard me. It's the hand of God."? A page later, Granny is given forty-seven additional mules and Ringo replies, "Whose hand was that?" What does he mean? Does this scene suggest a Calvinistic Granny?

8. At the end of this chapter Granny and the boys kneel to pray for forgiveness for having a hundred and twenty-two mules instead of a hundred and ten. Why are we told, "The washing blew soft and peaceful and bright on the clothesline"? What is Granny's sin? Is she lonely?

#### D. Riposte in Tertio

1. Why does Granny insist that Ringo call Ab Snopes, "Mr. Snopes"? What does Ab do for Granny? Does Granny like Ab?
2. What does Granny do with the money she has earned? Does she believe what she does with it justifies the way she gets it? Granny goes to church to say she has "sinned." What is her sin?
3. Why does Granny return to church the next day (Part 3)? What does she believe is her sin now? What is peculiar about her prayer? What, does her prayer suggest, is the nature of the god to whom she prays? Why does she say she sinned?
4. Why must Granny face Grumby? Why is she not afraid of Grumby? What assumption about Grumby does Granny make that is similar to the assumption she makes about Yankee officers?
5. Granny shows herself astute in business dealings, courageous before frightening odds. Yet Bayard says, "even Ringo and I knew at fifteen that Grumby, or whoever he was, was a coward and that you might frighten a brave man, but that nobody dared frighten a coward. . . ." What is it that Bayard and Ringo know that Granny does not know? Or what belief does Granny hold that they do not? Note the distinction that Bayard makes between brave men and cowards, and watch for him to use it again later. Why does Grumby kill Granny? Could the helpless old woman threaten him bodily?

#### E. Vendee

1. What is the color of the dirt mound above Granny's grave?
2. Why does Bayard feel he must get Grumby? Does anyone tell him to get Grumby? Does anyone expect him to get Grumby? Why does Uncle Buck initially think that Ab Snopes did not kill Granny?
3. What attitude of Granny's is suggested in Rev. Fortinbride's sermon before her grave?
4. Are all expectancies met in the killing of Grumby? Why do Ringo and Bayard pluck off Grumby's hand? Would Granny have approved of this killing? What was her response to the attempted killing of the Yankee soldier? Can you say what might be Bayard and Ringo's motivation for killing Grumby?
5. Why does Ringo say, "It wasn't him or Ab Snopes either that kilt her." "It was them mules. That first batch of mules we got for nothing." What does he mean? How can the mules be said to have killed Granny?

6. Uncle Buck calls the hand "The proof and the expiation." What does he mean by "expiation"? Do Drusilla and John Sartoris approve of the killing? In what sense are Bayard and Ringo alone in the killing?

#### F. Skirmish at Sartoris

1. What is Drusilla's relationship to John Sartoris? Why does Drusilla not obviously feel any sorrow at the death of her affianced husband and of her father? Why does Bayard say, "there had been reserved for Drusilla the highest destiny of a Southern woman--to be the bride-widow of a lost cause. . . ." In whose eyes was this the highest destiny? In the eyes of Southern Womanhood what was the war all about? Why does Aunt Louisa, in her letter, say that Drusilla had "cast away that for which her father died"? What is referred to in "that for which"?
2. What does Ringo mean, "This war ain't over. Hit just started good"? Why has the war "just started"?
3. What is the "condition" that the ladies from Jefferson assume is Drusilla's? Why do they insist that she marry John Sartoris? Does John Sartoris hold the same set of values as these ladies? If not, did he at any time?
4. Why does John kill the Burdens? Does he view his act as moral, amoral? What set of values does this act suggest he has? Aunt Louisa's response to the news that Drusilla and John have killed the Burdens is "Do you mean to tell me that Drusilla and that man are not married yet?" What is suggested by her reaction? What is the response of the Jefferson aristocracy to the killing?

#### G. An Odor of Verbena

1. What is Bayard's age in this chapter? Does Mrs. Wilkin tell Bayard that "Who lives by the sword shall die by it"?
2. What does Bayard mean he would never be "The Sartoris" to Ringo?
3. Bayard says that "in a way Ringo has changed even less than I had since that day when we had nailed Grumby's body to the door of the old compress." In what way has Bayard changed?
4. What Commandment does Bayard believe above all others offers "anything of hope and peace"? What does Bayard say is the basic difference between himself and Professor Wilkins? What difference between Bayard and his father is suggested by this contrast?
5. Drusilla says to Bayard that "There are worse things than killing men, Bayard. There are worse things than being killed." What "things" is she talking about? What does Drusilla think is the "finest thing that can happen to a man"? Why does Drusilla want Bayard to tell John Sartoris that they have made love? What is the nature of Drusilla's fascination for Bayard?
6. Drusilla asks Bayard, "Have you forgotten Grumby?" He replies, "I never will forget him." Does Bayard's answer take on new meaning in the light of events that follow?
7. Why doesn't Bayard's admission to his father that he has made love to Drusilla have any effect on Sartoris?
8. Why does John Sartoris go before Redmond unarmed? Would he have gone unarmed three years earlier? Why has Sartoris wrangled with Redmond



anyway? Is his going unarmed before Redmond consistent with the picture you have of him from earlier chapters? Precisely how do you picture Sartoris?

9. Why does Bayard Sartoris go before Redmond unarmed? Would he have gone unarmed three years earlier? Is Bayard's action parallel to his father's? Is his motivation similar to his father's? Where has Bayard been faced before with the demand that he kill? What forces act on Bayard to insist that he kill?
10. Does Bayard's decision to let Redmond go isolate him from the Jefferson community? or is he already isolated?
11. Why does Drusilla say again and again, "I kissed his hand"?
12. Why does Redmond miss Bayard? Can you think of any reason for Faulkner's choosing the name "Redmond"?
13. Why does Drusilla wear verbena? Why does she leave a single sprig of it on Bayard's pillow?

#### Discussion Questions

1. What is Bayard's picture of his father as developed in Chapters 1 and 2? What effect does this picture have on Bayard's behavior? Is Bayard's view of his father influencing his behavior after Sartoris' death?
2. Does Sartoris fight admirably against the Yankees? Is he a regular soldier? What front does he fight on? Why is John frequently at home? In what sense does John Sartoris become a legend? What effect does the legend have on Bayard's behavior?
3. Compare the scenes of Bayard shooting at the Yankee, of his shooting Grumby, and of his facing Redmond. What similarities can you find? What can you say about Bayard's motivation in each case? What, precisely, has Bayard learned?
4. Bayard comments twice on a difference between men and women: "Only like I said, maybe times are never strange to women: that it is just one continuous monotonous thing full of the repeated follies of their men folks." And later, "Mrs. Wilkins didn't offer me a horse and pistol, not because she liked me any less than Professor Wilkins but because she was a woman and so wiser than any man, else the men would not have gone on with the War for two years after they knew they were whipped." What attitude does this suggest about women? Is this in any way Faulkner's attitude about women? How do these passages square with Aunt Louisa's treatment of Drusilla? Would Bayard include Drusilla in these comments on women? Would he include Granny?
5. On page 165 Bayard says, "(there was a thin sickle of moon like the heel print of a boot in wet sand)". Why does he repeat this image on page 190?
6. Bayard says early in the chapter that Drusilla wears verbena because it "was the only scent you could smell above the smell of horses and courage and so it was the only one that was worth the wearing." Why should Drusilla leave a single sprig of verbena on Bayard's pillow before leaving for Montgomery? In the last line of the story Bayard says verbena had that odor "which she said you could smell alone above the smell of horses." Why does he omit "courage"? Is it no longer necessary to smell verbena above courage? Is more than one kind of courage being considered here?



7. What would you say Bayard has learned that his father and Granny did not learn? John Sartoris and Granny die in somewhat similar situations. Can you find anything similar in their attitudes, values, dispositions, that leads to this common fate?
8. At the beginning of the story Ringo and Bayard are brothers in spirit, if not in birth and color. Is there evidence that this brotherhood has ended?
9. What is the irony in the difference between Col. Dick's and Grumby's treatment of Granny? What is Faulkner trying to achieve with this contrast?
10. In what ways are the themes of sin and loneliness developed in this story?
11. Cite evidence from the story that demonstrates man is capable of altering conditions around him and within him, evidence that suggests man is capable of controlling his own goodness and destiny.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, FAULKNER AND TWAIN:

1. At the beginning of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain had Huckleberry say that in Tom Sawyer Mr. Mark Twain had "told the truth, mainly," with the implication that he intended to do better than "mainly" in Huckleberry Finn. From the novel cite specific instances of Twain's truth-telling with respect to each of the following:

Codes	- religious, civil, chivalric
Institutions	- slavery, aristocracy, family
Taste	- in slavery, home decoration
Morals	- public and private, among high and low
Manners	- the genteel tradition

Point out the contradictions between the pretense and the reality in several of the above categories.

- III. In the summer of 1876, shortly after making a revision of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain "began another boy's book" and within a month's time had written what is now substantially the first sixteen chapters of Huckleberry Finn. Then he felt he had run dry; his story wasn't getting anywhere. So he put it aside.

Of this beginning Bernard DeVoto has written: "There was narrative but no narrative purpose, no end toward which the story was moving. There was sequence, but no development and intensification. The book was so far a series of episodes, pointed in no particular direction and without much relationship to one another."

Six years later, in April, 1882, Twain visited the scenes of his boyhood and took a trip down the Mississippi River. Shortly thereafter, he took up Huckleberry Finn again and finished it before the end of the year.

1. Be prepared to support or refute DeVoto's statement about the first sixteen chapters of the novel.
2. Find evidence in the novel (in Chapter 17 and the following) that Twain overcame the deficiencies cited by DeVoto. That is, what elements of organization, what themes, what purposes that had not yet come into play at the end of Chapter 16 do emerge as significant elements in the structure of the total novel?

IV. All of Huckleberry Finn and the early chapters of The Unvanquished are narrated by thirteen-year-old boys.

1. Compare the two, Huck and Bayard: How clearly and completely is each conceived as a personality by his creator? Compare the status of the two; their relative maturity, their knowledge of the world about them.
2. You know that Huck is telling his own story. Have you reason to believe that, in The Unvanquished, Bayard is similarly telling his own story? How does this story, even this early in your reading, seem to compare with Huckleberry Finn in its dimensions, complications, purposes?
3. Comment on the relative appropriateness of the language each of the authors assigns to his narrator. How do the two boys compare in vision and subtlety of thought? In boyishness?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: THE FOUR NOVELS:

1. One of the purposes of our examination of the four novels--The Scarlet Letter, Billy Budd, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and The Unvanquished--is to demonstrate that evil, in a Calvinistic sense, has been a real concern of American writers:
  - A. What is the nature of evil as it is set forth by each of the four novels?
  - B. How is sin expiated or how is moral education demonstrated in each?
  - C. How do the characters of Arthur Dimmesdale and Billy Budd differ in respect to their awareness of sin and their expiation for it?
  - D. How do Huckleberry Finn and Bayard Sartoris resemble each other in respect to the ways they react to the problem of evil in their particular societies?
  - E. In what ways are Hester Prynne and Drusilla Sartoris alike--and how are they different in respect to their attitudes toward the moral codes of their societies?
  - F. In what ways are Arthur Dimmesdale and Bayard Sartoris composed of the same and different moral fiber?
  - G. In how many instances in the four novels do you encounter the implication that sin leads to alienation and loneliness? In how many

instances do you find the opposite--that sin leads to social acceptance--displayed?

III.. In an incidental sense only, these four novels deal with historical periods of America. What period is treated by each novel? How far removed from the historical period treated is the author of each?

IV. What is the most brilliant "burning" symbol or allegory in each of the four novels--the one which seems to give a local habitation and a name to its whole concern?



3

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Student Packet

MAN AND SOCIETY:

AMERICAN MATERIALISM: SATIRE

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## Outline:

- I. Overview
- II. Babbitt
  - A. Study Questions.
  - B. Discussion Questions.
- III. The Great Gatsby
  - A. Study Questions.
  - B. Discussion Questions.
- IV. The Waste Land
  - A. Introduction.
  - B. Questions For a First Reading.
  - C. Toward an Even Better Understanding.
  - D. Questions for a Second Reading.
  - E. Discussion Questions.
- V. A Study of Satiric Techniques.
- VI. Desire As a Theme.

### I. Overview:

In this unit, you will read literary works by American authors who write satires which expose our culture, particularly the materialism and rootless cupidity of the "Roaring Twenties." The purpose of the unit is twofold: (1) to acquaint you with characteristic American attitudes toward life and its meaning, particularly as those attitudes were displayed in the 1920's; and, (2) to ask you to examine the satiric techniques of the authors included in this unit as these techniques are applied to life in the '20's. A good many social critics, both past and present, have argued that modern man has sold out in order to accumulate more and more things, to gain more and more wealth and comfort, and to achieve a sense of higher and higher social status. Such critics accuse the American people of adopting a "wealth-is-everything," a pragmatic, view of life; what permits one to "get ahead," what works, is best. Such critics would argue that mass culture has destroyed the idealism of earlier days. Gone, they say, is the pioneering spirit of the American patriarchs; gone, the courage to dream big dreams; gone, the conviction to live by those dreams; and, in their place, has come the faceless, spiritually-lost amnesia of the worker and businessman identified not by what he is but by his occupation, by the section of town in which he lives, the number of electrical appliances in his house, and the number and kinds of cars he has in his garage: a man created by and controlled by persistent and powerful spirit-crushing forces over which he exercises no control and perhaps cannot exercise control.

American novelists and poets, such as Fitzgerald, Lewis, and Eliot, have often attacked this view--claiming to perceive in American culture not the earthy Paradise of the controlled environment but a kind of temporal Hell. Each of the

authors in this unit depicts a different kind of hell, does so through different satirical techniques and points of view. Lewis' Babbitt portrays and satirically examines middle-class American life and values through a fiction, the center of which is the career of a Midwestern business man, George F. Babbitt. The Great Gatsby by Fitzgerald, is also a fiction about a business man, an Eastern not a Midwestern one (Babbitt views the hero through the eyes of an omniscient, all-seeing narrator, Gatsby sees the hero through the eyes of the Midwesterner who tells the story). Eliot's Waste Land, the only poem in this unit, is also a businessman's poem, seen through the eyes of a London clerk; it might be called an epic poem about modern man and his society, a mock epic damning rather than glorifying the London which typifies all modern society.

Before you read these works, your teacher may wish to provide you with a more detailed characterization of American society in the 1920's and of the development of materialistic views of life. Such information as your teacher provides and as you are able to find about these two topics will be immensely helpful in understanding what the authors you study are attacking. Moreover, it will prove helpful if you review on your own or with your teachers' help some of the principles and techniques of satire about which you studied in the ninth-grade unit on satire.

## II. Babbitt

Babbitt was published in 1922, a time when the business man was the "high-priest" and perhaps the dominant force in American culture. Sinclair Lewis creates in this novel a fiction which allows him to "display" the position which we accorded the businessman as the motor and magus and counsellor for society. But to read Babbitt as the picture of somebody else's face may be to misread. We are all there.

### A. READING QUESTIONS

[Note: The Arabic numbers in most cases, denote a question or series of questions over the corresponding section of the chapter, e.g., question 2 under Chapter I refers to section 2 of Chapter I.]

#### CHAPTER I

1. a. Is the name of the city perhaps significant? How? Why is there a mist? Lewis could make it rain or the sun shine if he wished, couldn't he?
- b. How might towers "aspire"? Why use this word?
- c. Why does Lewis carefully point out that the towers are office buildings, not citadels or churches? Does this say anything about his attitude toward what he is describing?
- d. Why does he compare one part of the city with other parts? What might his point be?
- e. Why does our author say "homes -- they seemed -- for laughter and tranquility"? Why the "they seemed"? Notice the same thing at the end of Section I. Why does he keep doing this?
2. a. Why does Lewis say, "there was nothing of the giant in the aspect..."? Does this way of describing Babbitt indicate how Lewis feels about Babbitt?

- b. What does Lewis think of Babbitt's occupation? How do you know?
- c. Reread the description of Babbitt. What kind of man is he? Why does he "seem prosperous"? "extremely married"? "unromantic"? What might Lewis be suggesting? Is Babbitt in any way a romantic? How do you know?
- d. What does the dream of the fairy child reveal about Babbitt?
- 3. a. Why does Lewis dwell on such an insignificant thing as an alarm clock?
- b. Why, in the second paragraph, does he begin two clauses, "It may"?
- c. How does Babbitt think of his blanket? Does this suggest something about his character?
- d. Is there anything significant in the words, "whose god was Modern Appliances"?
- e. Is there any indication as to how Babbitt sees his wife and family?
- 4. a. Why does Myra apologize to Babbitt for his having a headache? Is there anything peculiar here?
- b. Does the conversation between Myra and Babbitt suggest anything about the nature of their relationship?
- c. Who is the God of Progress? Why does Babbitt thank him?
- d. Why does Lewis spend so much time talking about Babbitt's spectacles? Do we get a hint here not only of Babbitt's character, but of Lewis's attitude toward him?
- e. Why does Lewis have his hero wear a "gray suit," not a blue or brown or black one?
- f. Might there be something symbolic in the tie-pin that Babbitt puts on?
- g. Consider the sentence, "they were of eternal importance, like baseball or the Republican Party."
- h. What is Lewis saying when he tells about the Booster's Club button?
- i. What are Babbitt's "complex worries"? Why are they called "complex"?
- 5. Why is the tower compared to a "temple spire of the religion of business"?

## CHAPTER II

- 1. a. Comment on the phrase -- "the sympathy she was too experienced to feel and much too experienced not to show." Why does this bedroom settle into "impersonality"?
- b. Why are the mattresses "triumphant modern" ones? Why is the room compared to a hotel room?
- 2. a. Why does Babbitt "pontifically" tread?
- b. What is revealed about Babbitt's values in the conversation with Verona?
- c. Why are the headlines of the paper compared to an "exhilarating drug"?
- d. How does Babbitt regard Charles McKelvey?

## CHAPTER III

- 1. a. How does Lewis picture Babbitt's attitude toward his car and his office?
- b. What does Babbitt find wrong with the Doppelbraus?
- c. How does Lewis display Littlefield? Does the comparison of Littlefield and Doppelbrau reveal Lewis' attitudes toward them?



2.
  - a. Consider the sentence, "He was, to the eye, . . ."? Does Lewis here suggest that Babbitt interests him in some other way than as a man?
  - b. Why is the filling in of gasoline called a "rite"?
  - c. Why is Babbitt compared to the Good Samaritan? Is he one? Why is the man whom Babbitt picks up called a "victim of benevolence"?
  - d. Is there anything significant in Lewis' reporting that Babbitt "respected bigness in anything"?
3.
  - a. Why does Babbitt enter his office through the rear door?
  - b. Why is the office building compared to a village? What role does Babbitt have in that village?
  - c. Consider the sentence, "It was a vault, a steel chapel where loafing and laughter were raw sin." What does this sentence reveal about Babbitt? his occupation? Lewis' attitude?
  - d. Notice the style of the form-letter Babbitt dictates. What does this letter suggest about Babbitt and his society? To what does Lewis compare this letter?
  - e. How does Babbitt regard Miss McGoun? Why does he not have thoughts "more intimate than this"?

#### CHAPTER IV

1.
  - a. Is the sentence, "It was a morning of artistic creation," in any way less-than-straight?
  - b. Why does Babbitt reject the poem? Are his reasons sound?
2. Is there any indication Lewis finds the merchandizing of cemetery lots a bit distasteful? What indicates that feeling?
3.
  - a. Why does Babbitt keep trying to stop smoking? Does he do so on moral grounds? for health reasons? to make himself feel superior?
  - b. Why does Lewis say Babbitt is "conventionally honest"?
  - c. Why are the Good Fellows referred to as "the ruling caste"?
  - d. Why does Lewis mention Babbitt's architectural ignorance?
  - e. What are "orgies of commercial righteousness"?
  - f. Why does Lewis tell us both about Babbitt's knowing the real estate market and about his ignorance of social problems? Where does he learn what he does know about social problems?
  - g. Is there any touch of irony in the sentence, "But Babbitt was virtuous"? What?
5.
  - a. Notice Lewis' description of Lyte's eyes. How does Lewis use this description to comment on Lyte's moral character?
  - b. How does the deal with Burdy offer Lewis a way to comment on modern business ethics?

#### CHAPTER V

1. Why does Lewis say that Babbitt's luncheon plans are "somewhat less elaborate than the plans for a general European war"?
2.
  - a. Is there anything humorous in the name Parthenon Shoe Shine Parlor?
  - b. Why does Lewis say that Babbitt feels like a "shuttle of polished steel darting in a vast machine"? Does this tell us something about his

attitude toward Babbitt?

- c. Notice the last sentence of section two of this chapter. Does this sentence in any way help us to interpret the scene about the cigarette lighter? The whole section? How might it? Why is the adventure "romantic"? Why is the lighter called "treasure"?
3.
  - a. Look at the first sentence in this section. What function does it serve?
  - b. What does the phrase "a combination of cathedral crypt and rathskellar" suggest about the members of the Athletic Club?
  - c. What is "the virus of today's restlessness"?
  - d. What is a Bolsheviki? Why does Vergil call Babbitt one? Is this a compliment?
  - e. Why is the Athletic Club washroom said to be "Neronian"?
  - f. Look at the conversation in which Babbitt spells out his virtues to Paul Riesling. Why does he think himself so good? Is he? Why or why not?
  - g. What do Paul and Babbitt find lacking in their lives as businessmen?
  - h. Notice the sentence: "In fact you're so earnest about morality, old Georgie, that I hate to think how essentially immoral you must be underneath." Is Paul right? How do you know?
  - i. Why does Babbitt feel a "curious reckless joy" when he agrees with something that contradicts his "defense of duty and Christian patience"? What does this indicate about Babbitt's "defense"?

## CHAPTER VI

1.
  - a. How does Babbitt look at mechanical devices? Why does Lewis keep telling us about Babbitt's interest in gadgetry?
  - b. How does Babbitt differ from his father-in-law? Which does Lewis probably find more admirable? Why?
  - c. Is Babbitt's estimate of himself "just"?
2. Why does Lewis include the scene with Graff? What does it reveal about Babbitt? Does he enjoy his role as an executive?
3.
  - a. What kind of arguments does the family use in order to try and persuade Babbitt to buy a car? What values are implied in such arguments?
  - b. Why is the twentieth century called "barbarous"? Why does Lewis compare the present to the Middle Ages?
  - c. Why does Babbitt feel unprepared to comment on Milton and Shakespeare? Why does he prefer the teaching of business English to literature?
  - d. What kinds of goals does Ted have? Why does he prefer some occupations to others?
  - e. Consider the clause, "which the energy and foresight of American commerce have contributed to the science of education." Is Lewis being ironic? How do you know? What is the significance of the absence of the "owl," or "Minerva," and the use of dollar signs?
  - f. Why does Lewis include the advertisement of the correspondence course in public speaking? What does it illustrate?
  - g. Why does Babbitt call Ted "a young Dempsey"?
  - h. From where has Ted collected his advertisements? What is Lewis satirizing here?
  - i. Examine the paragraph beginning, "Trouble with a lot of folks is...."

How does this paragraph help us to understand how Lewis' satire works?  
 j. What defense of college education does Babbitt make? What values must he have to make such a defense?

4. Why did Babbitt find Myra so attractive? Is Lewis satirizing suburban marriages? How?

## CHAPTER VII

1. Why does Lewis stop here to tell us about the interior of the Babbitt house? Is he trying to make a point about something? Notice the parenthetical statements. Why is it compared to a block of artificial ice?
2. Notice the last sentence of this section. Is there any irony in the phrase "at the end of this great and treacherous day of veiled rebellions"? What might the "veiled rebellions" be? Why "veiled" ones?
3.
  - a. Why does Lewis include the bathtub scene? How does it help characterize Babbitt?
  - b. Notice the paragraph beginning: "Just as he was an Elk...." What is the point of this paragraph? Does Lewis imply a judgment against Babbitt? What might that judgment be?
  - c. Why is the preparing of the bed called a "rite"?
4.
  - a. Why do several of the paragraphs begin with, "At that moment..." What do these paragraphs tell us about Babbitt? About the people of Zenith? What does Lewis satirize in each of these paragraphs?
  - b. Why does Lewis include Mike Monday? What is Lewis' object-of-satire in this passage? How does he go about suggesting that religion has become a business?
5. Characterize Seneca Doane and Dr. Yavitch. Does Lewis agree with either of them? How do you know?
6.
  - a. What is Offutt's attitude toward Babbitt? What does he find attractive in him? Offensive in him? Are we to accept Offutt's judgment?
  - b. Babbitt again dreams about the fairy child. What might she represent to Babbitt? The sea?

## CHAPTER VIII

1. What does the planning of the dinner party reveal about the Babbitts' conception of themselves and their role in Zenith society?
2.
  - a. Why is Babbitt's questioning the worth of a Floral Heights dinner party referred to as a "sacrilege"?
  - b. Why does Lewis tell us about the "manner of obtaining alcohol under the reign of righteousness and prohibition"? Why does he link up righteousness and prohibition?
  - c. Why does Lewis keep reminding us that Babbitt originally came from Catawba?
  - d. Why doesn't Babbitt own a shaker? Is he a prude?

- e. Why is the drinking of cocktails called "a canonical rite"? Why does Lewis use the word "rite" to describe so many of Babbitt's activities?
- f. Why is Babbitt called "a moist and ecstatic almoner"?
- g. What kinds of arguments are given for and against prohibition? What one thing do they have in common?
- h. Is there any difference between Babbitt's guests and the small townspeople they describe?
- 3. a. What does Lewis probably think of the "poetry of industrialism"? Does he probably regard it as a "literary line where you got to open up new territory"?
- b. Is Frink's Zeeco ad possessed of "an elegant color"?

#### CHAPTER IX

- 1. a. What is the novel's attitude toward the women of Floral Heights?
- b. Are the Swansons perfect examples of the general pattern described? Why or why not?
- c. Notice Babbitt's opening compliment to Louetta Swanson. What does it suggest about him? about her?
- d. Is there any humor in the suggestion that Frink and Dante are fellow poets?
- e. Why is Babbitt upset? Why does he have an "impression of a slaggy cliff..."
- 2. How does Babbitt win permission to go on his and Paul's fishing trip? What does he think of his new-won freedom?

#### CHAPTER X

- 1. a. Why is it appropriate that the Rieslings live in the apartment Lewis describes?
- b. Does Zilla view life as "a plot against her"? How does Lewis dramatize her view of life? Why is she compared to a Medusa? Why does Babbitt call her a combination of Queen Victoria and Cleopatra?
- c. Why to "a connoisseur of scenes" is nothing more enjoyable than a thorough, melodramatic, egotistic humility?
- 2. What is the purpose of the scene about the buying of fishing tackle?
- 3. a. Notice the paragraph beginning, "Which of them said which has never been determined...." What does this paragraph satirize? Has the same thing been satirized before?
- b. Consider the context of the sentence: "They admired and loved one another now." Does this sentence help us to understand what Lewis is doing in this entire scene?
- c. How does this scene reveal the difference between Paul and Babbitt?

#### CHAPTER XI

- 1. What does Babbitt fail to perceive about Paul when they go to look at the ocean liners?
- 2. a. Is the dog in the paragraph at the beginning of section 2 like Babbitt in any way?
- b. Why does this passage end with the sentence, "for once, Babbitt understood him"?
- 3. Why does Babbitt appear out of place at the lodge?



4. How does Lewis manage to keep pointing out the differences between Paul and Babbitt? Why does he? Are they entirely different or are they similar in some ways?

## CHAPTER XII

1. Why does Lewis continually talk about Babbitt's attempts to cease smoking? Is Lewis against smoking?
2. a. Babbitt's going to ball games and yelling is described as a "rite." What is ritualistic about this activity? What does the word "rite" suggest about Babbitt's attitude toward going to baseball games?
- b. How does Lewis satirize Babbitt's "patriotism" and "love of sports"?
- c. Notice the repetition of "hustle" in the last two paragraphs of this section. Why is it repeated so often? Can't Lewis find another word?
3. Why does Lewis include this section about the Country Club?
4. a. How does he satirize the Chateau? What does he find wrong with it, the performances, the spectators?

## CHAPTER XIII

1. How does Babbitt happen to be asked to speak to the S.A.R.E.B.? Is it important that it is accidental?
2. What does Lewis imply, in this section, about Babbitt's self-confidence and intellectual ability?
3. a. Is it significant that the tune of the song is "Auld Lang Syne"?
- b. Why does Babbitt become more sedate? How is his self-confidence restored?
- c. Why should Lewis so contrive that he see Lucile McKelvey? What does she represent to Babbitt? to Lewis?
4. How does this scene reveal what might be called Babbitt's "boobism"?
5. a. Notice Lewis' comment about the pastor's invocation. What is his attitude toward the practice of invocations at this kind of convention?
- b. Does Mr. Knowlton's attitude toward his guests coincide with Lewis'?
6. Is Babbitt's purpose in presenting this speech to: "Give the Profession a boast"? Support your answer by citing passages from the novel.
7. What is attacked in this section?
8. a. How does Lewis parody typical convention resolutions?
- b. Does Babbitt probably underrate or overrate his importance and ability?
9. How do the parties that follow the convention portray Babbitt's social ineptness? his attempt to be a "big man"?
10. a. Why does Lewis say, "and never listened to one another"?
- b. Why does Lewis mention the amount of the tip for the hat girl?
11. Why is Babbitt's excursion not "officially recognized even by himself"?

## CHAPTER XIV

1. a. Why does Lewis say that Harding "was appointed"? Why not elected?
- b. Is the sentence, "He deserved his glory," ironical? The sentence, "He did not confuse his audience by silly subtleties?"
- c. How great and enduring is Babbitt's fame?
2. a. Why do you suppose our hero includes an anecdote about Lincoln?
- b. How does Babbitt's family regard him? How does Babbitt see himself?
3. a. Why doesn't Babbitt accept the offer of appointments for his "poor relations"?

- b. Demonstrate that Lewis parodies after-dinner speeches in this section. Point to particular after-dinner clichés which are here aped.
- c. Babbitt spends a great deal of time describing the Solid American Citizen. What kinds of values does he attribute to him? Why does he constantly contrast America and Europe? Does Lewis imply that he does not have a very highly developed cultural and aesthetic sensitivity? Where?
- d. Look at the last sentence of the quote from Frink. What does this sentence suggest about our society and culture? What does Lewis think of Frink's poem?
- e. What does Babbitt's comparison of statistics and the "good news of the Bible" tell us about his view of business and of religion?
- f. When Babbitt says, "the way of the righteous is not all roses," to what kind of righteousness does he refer?
- g. Why does Babbitt attack teachers, lecturers, and journalists? What role would he assign to the intellectual?
- 4. Why might Lewis report Grunch's encouragement of Babbitt and Babbitt's reaction to it?

#### CHAPTER XV

- 1. Consider the sentence, "Fame did not bring the social advancement which the Babbitts deserved." Is Lewis serious here? Is Babbitt's attitude a sour-grape attitude?
- 2. a. Why does Lewis link up "true American diversions" and "spiritual outpourings"?
- b. Again Lewis contrasts Paul and Babbitt. What might Paul's role be in this novel?
- c. What kind of man is McKelvey? Why does Lewis say that "he was not hindered by scruples, by either the vice or virtue of the Older Puritan tradition?"
- d. How does Babbitt look upon a college education? Has his view of its usefulness changed in the course of the novel? Why or why not?
- 3. Lewis says that "heaviness was over them" for "no reason that was clear to Babbitt." Is the reason clear to the other characters? to the reader?
- 4. a. Why after reading the account about Doak does Babbitt wish not to be invited to a dinner given for Doak? Does he exhibit any pride in saying this?
- b. Why is Babbitt "oppressed with futility"? Does he ever admit to himself or anyone his social ineptness?
- 5. a. What does the dinner party at the Overbrooks reveal about the Babbitts' conception of society?
- b. Lewis notes that the Babbitts do not speak of the Overbrooks again. Earlier he said that they do not speak of the McKelveys. Why do they rule out of their conversation two such different families?

#### CHAPTER XVI

- 1. a. What is Lewis' attitude toward lodges and "secret orders"? How do you know? How does he explain the motives of Americans who join them?
- b. Notice the comment about Zilla. Why does Lewis compare her to the lost man?
- 2. a. What do the titles of the columns by the pastor suggest about his conceptions of Christianity?
- b. Why does Lewis point out that Drew's theology is Presbyterian and his

- church building Episcopalian? Is there an implicit contradiction?
3. a. How does Babbitt conceive of heaven? Is Lewis satirizing something?
  - b. What motivates Babbitt's attendance at church? What role does he assign to the church? Is Babbitt's thinking, from Lewis' point of view, mis-directed?
  - c. Does Lewis apparently agree with Babbitt's assessment of Sunday School teachers? How do you know?
  - d. Why is Babbitt attracted to "moral power"? Does Lewis agree with his admiration of "moral power"?
  - e. Is there any similarity between the rhetoric of the Sunday School journals and that of the advertisements and speeches we have encountered earlier in the novel? Point out specific words, phrases, metaphors.
4. Why should Babbitt refer to the "Christian life" as "enterprising"?

## CHAPTER XVII

1. a. How can a mansion be "virtuous and aloof"?
  - b. Why does Lewis so contrive that Eathorne has drinks served?
  - c. Notice the plan Babbitt outlines. Does it sound like earlier plans at all? What point is Lewis making?
2. Why is this section included? Notice the last sentence.
3. a. How does Lewis satirize the success of the methods Babbitt employs to develop the Sunday School? Supply specific evidence for your position.
  - b. How do Babbitt and his friends regard Babbitt's working for the Sunday School?
4. How does Escott regard Doctor Drew? Is Escott's article satirical at all?
  5. What does this section reveal about Babbitt's attitude toward church and religion?

## CHAPTER XVIII

1. a. Why does Lewis suggest that Eunice resembles the fairy child of Babbitt's dreams?
  - b. How does Lewis use this section to satirize the relationship of the businessman father to his offspring?
2. Is Babbitt disturbed by the goings-on at the party? Or is he simply jealous? How do you know?
3. Does Lewis perhaps agree with Ted's judgment of his father? To what extent?
4. How does this scene reveal Babbitt's lack of understanding of himself?
  5. Babbitt in this section again perceives a sort of spiritual malaise in his life. Is there any indication that he will ever be cured?

## CHAPTER XIX

1. a. What have the first two paragraphs of this chapter to do with one another?
  - b. Is there anything ironical about Babbitt's discovery of the dishonest practices of Stan Graff, in this chapter?
2. Is Stan Graff's criticism of Babbitt sound? Does Lewis agree with it? How do you know?
3. a. How do Babbitt and Ted value marriage?
  - b. Is there any indication why Babbitt feels lonely when Ted leaves Chicago?
  - c. Why might Lewis find it appropriate to have Babbitt encounter Doak at this

- point in the novel and not earlier?
- d. How does Babbitt's encounter with Doak shatter his social categorizing?
  - e. Does Lewis seem to agree with Doak's judgment of American society? to approve of Doak and English society?
4. Why is Babbitt so surprised to see Paul? Does his reaction to Paul and his mistress suggest something about his character?

## CHAPTER XX

- 1. a. Why does Lewis use the words "secure" and "moral" together?
- b. On what grounds does Babbitt criticize Paul's conduct? Are they sound?
- c. Is Paul's conduct, morally considered, worse than some of Babbitt's business deals? What does Babbitt think about this question? Lewis? The reader?
- 2. Does Babbitt's lying for Paul achieve any real purpose? Is Babbitt's interest in protecting Paul or their marriage?

## CHAPTER XXI

- 1. a. Why does Lewis give such a detailed account of the Boosters' Luncheon?
- b. Does Lewis share Frink's attitude toward culture?
- c. Why does Lewis so contrive that Babbitt should discover that Paul has shot Zilla only moments after he has been elected vice-president?

## CHAPTER XXII

- 1. a. What is the "obscenity of fate"? Why does Babbitt try to avoid it?
- b. Why does Paul probably refuse to see Babbitt? Does Babbitt understand why?
- c. Why should Lewis say that Myra "exulted" when she comments on Paul's and Zilla's marriage?
- d. Is Maxwell's judgment on Babbitt sound? Provide evidence to show that it is or is not.
- 2. Why does Babbitt appreciate the avoiding of talking about Paul at the Rough-necks' table?
- 3. Why is Babbitt's world meaningless without Paul?

## CHAPTER XXIII

- 1. a. Why does Babbitt object to Verona's books?
- b. A philosopher has said, "A man's religion is what he does when he is alone." If this is so, what is Babbitt's religion?
- c. How has Babbitt's dream of the fairy girl changed? Does the change portend anything for the future?
- 2. Why is Babbitt characterized as a "conscious rebel"?
- 3. How is this section related to the dream in the preceding chapter?
- 4. Why does Babbitt think of Paul in this section? Will Babbitt become another Paul?

## CHAPTER XXIV

- 1. a. Why is the previous night referred to as one of "fog"?



- b. In what way are Babbitt and Paul "dead"?
2. a. Why does Babbitt prefer Mrs. Judique to Mrs. Swanson?
3. a. Why does Lewis spend so much time describing Babbitt's reaction to the shampooing?  
b. What is significant about Babbitt's observing that the manicure girl is "a fine girl, a good girl--but not too uncomfortably good"?
4. a. How does Babbitt rationalize his date with the manicure girl?  
b. What does this episode teach Babbitt?

## CHAPTER XXV

1. Notice the last sentence in the section, "He was hunted...." How does Lewis make Babbitt more than an individual man here?
2. a. Why does Lewis observe, "He was well-trained"?  
b. Is there any hint of inevitability in Babbitt's life?
3. a. What hint about the future is implied in Babbitt's vacation preparations?  
b. Are Babbitt's speculations about what he could do sound ones?  
c. Is it ironical that Babbitt should become homesick?  
d. Is Babbitt's resolution at the end of this section suspect?
4. What do Babbitt's reflections upon Zenith suggest about his attempt to rebel?

## CHAPTER XXVI

1. How is it that Babbitt can suddenly understand Zilla?
2. How has Zilla changed? Is her change for the good? Support your answer with evidence from the text. How does Babbitt react? Does the reader react in the same way that Babbitt does? Why or why not?
3. Has Babbitt really changed? Why or why not? If he hasn't, what is Lewis implying?

## CHAPTER XXVII

1. a. How is the preacher's sermon a defense of the establishment?  
b. Does the reader get the feeling that Babbitt is now a true liberal? Why or why not?
2. a. Why can't Babbitt account for Doane and Brackbank's marching?
3. Why should Babbitt be frightened?
4. What has Grunch come to represent?
5. What does Mrs. Babbitt represent? Are we to agree with her, Babbitt, or neither?

## CHAPTER XXVIII

1. a. Is Babbitt interested only in business as he goes to see Mrs. Judique? What indicates he is? that he is not?  
b. Why is Mrs. Judique compared to "a light on the horizon"?  
c. Notice the sentence, "They agreed that prohibition was prohibitive." What is Lewis' judgment on their conversation? Are there any other such sentences?  
d. Is Mrs. Judique's apparent admiration of Babbitt genuine?

## CHAPTER XXIX

1. How does Babbitt become "experimental"?
2. a. How has Babbitt's home life changed? for the better or the worse?  
b. Why does Myra decide to go on a vacation?  
c. What happens to Babbitt's firm resolution?
3. a. Why in the first sentence does Lewis say, "seemed to control"?  
b. What does Babbitt find wrong with the Midnight People? Are we to agree with him? Why does his opinion change?  
c. Notice the words: "straitened conventions...of their life of pleasure and freedom." Is Lewis somehow ironical?
4. a. Why are comments about "religion, love or gardening" grouped together?  
b. Why has his view of Doppelbrau changed?  
c. What indications are there that Babbitt has completely changed his way and view of life? Are there any that he hasn't, except for appearances?

## CHAPTER XXX

1. Does the reconciliation of George and Myra Babbitt appear permanent?
2. How does Babbitt's view of his wife change? Why does he see her "as a human being"? Hasn't he before?
3. Of what does Myra's rebellion consist? Does it promise to be like George's?
4. a. What is Babbitt's reaction to Mrs. Mudge? What is Lewis' attitude toward her? How do you know?  
b. Is there something contradictory about the "message" of Mrs. Mudge and the Babbitts' conversation after the lecture?

## CHAPTER XXXI

1. What do Babbitt's varying reflections upon Tanis and Myra suggest about his change in character?
2. a. What kinds of emotional crises does Babbitt face in this section? If he were changed completely would they be crises?  
b. Why is Babbitt's freedom called "a barren freedom of icy Northern winds"?

## CHAPTER XXXII

1. Why is Babbitt said to be a martyr? Why should Lewis use such a word to describe him?
2. How does Babbitt's action in this scene contradict his resolution of the previous night?
3. a. Why does Babbitt feel that if he gives in to the delegation from the Good Citizen's League he will give in to everything?  
b. Are we to admire Babbitt for refusing to join the League? Support your position with evidence from the entire novel.
4. With whom is the reader to agree, Babbitt or his wife?
5. a. How does the business world pressure Babbitt to become what he once was? Why? Because they are interested in Babbitt as a person?  
b. Why does Babbitt steadfastly refuse to return to the security of conformity?  
c. What kind of comfort does Babbitt receive from Ted and Eunice?

## CHAPTER XXXIII

1. a. What kind of voice is a "spiritual" voice?
- b. What effect does the sickness of Myra have upon Babbitt? Is there any indication that Babbitt and she will again have a "good" marriage?
- c. Is the reconciliation scene after the announcement of the impending operation too sentimental to be genuine? Does this suggest anything about Lewis' attitude?
- d. Why does the flask of alcohol in the laboratory bother Babbitt?
2. Why does George Babbitt become a Good Citizen now, and not earlier or later?

## CHAPTER XXXIV

1. a. Why does Lewis compare the League to the English aristocracy? Is the comparison satiric or complimentary?
- b. Is the League portrayed as an upholder of American ideals? Why or why not?
2. Why does Lewis include this scene?
3. Why does Babbitt find the return to the athletic club more satisfying than domestic peace?
- 4.-5. Why does Babbitt say, "They've licked me; licked me to the finish"? How has he been licked? By whom?
6. a. What is the significance of Babbitt's confession to Ted?
- b. Why must Ted and Eunice's elopement be announced here and not earlier?

## B. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first chapter of Babbitt exemplifies the way in which Lewis uses diction and irony in order to satirize. The following series of questions should provide you with guidelines in discussing Lewis' use of diction and irony.
  - a. What does the word "Zenith" mean? Do you think the name for the city was chosen at random by Lewis, or does the name somehow relate to the theme of the novel, at least as the theme is expressed in the first chapter? Does Babbitt, in other words, believe that American civilization is at a zenith? Why or why not? Support your answer from the attitudes and opinions Babbitt expresses in this chapter.
  - b. Read again the first paragraph of the novel. What are the two meanings, one usual and one archaic, for the word "aspire"? Can towers, or any other inanimate object really "aspire," "if one understands 'aspire' in its usual sense? Can a tower "aspire" if the word is read in its archaic sense? But who might see the tower 'aspiring' in the usual meaning of the word?
  - c. The words "austere", "sturdy," and "delicate" describe the office buildings in the center of Zenith. In what ways is Babbitt's life austere, sturdy, and delicate?
  - d. The towers of Zenith are "frankly and beautifully office buildings." This is not an "objective" description of scenery, but an emotional as well as a rational reaction to the towers. Who would see the towers in this way? Why?
2. Consider the setting in which this novel takes place. Does Lewis' description of the city in the opening paragraphs suggest the values of those who live



there? Does Lewis intend that the reader believe this to be a real city? Would not the reader find the novel more realistic if it were set in Chicago?

3. a. Babbitt, says Lewis, "never put on his B.V.D.'s without thanking the God of Progress...." What does "progress" mean here? Why does Babbitt regard it as a god? Does Lewis share Babbitt's view? How do you know?  
b. There is a school of thinkers given to an optimistic view which holds that things are getting better in every way every day. Would Babbitt agree with such an argument? Is he that optimistic? Is his dream about the fairy child related in any way to his optimistic view of history?
4. Lewis often uses religious vocabulary when he describes Babbitt's activities. You might wish to make a list of the religious words he uses and the activities he describes with them. For instance, he often uses the word "rite." Why does Lewis use religious vocabulary to describe apparently secular or non-religious activities? What does this vocabulary allow him to say about Babbitt's view of things? about Babbitt's society?
5. When Lewis created Babbitt, he could have assigned Babbitt almost any occupation. Babbitt could have been made a lawyer, a doctor, a professor, a minister. Is there any reason why he might have made Babbitt a real estate broker? Why not a lawyer? a banker? Does Babbitt's being a real estate broker allow Lewis to satirize something that he could not have had Babbitt had another occupation? What? In answering this question you might try to determine why another character -- say Littlefield or McKelvey -- could not be the hero without drastically changing the novel.
6. a. Lewis records several business transactions in which Babbitt plays a leading role. What is characteristic of these transactions? Why does Lewis include these accounts?  
b. Is Babbitt, as Lewis portrays him, more interested in means or ends? Toward what end is most of Babbitt's activity aimed? How does Babbitt choose the means by which he achieves those ends?
7. Sex and marital relationships become important in Lewis' satire of American culture. Below you will find a series of questions designed to help you discover why Lewis concerns himself with sex and marital relationships in his novel.
  - a. Consider the marriage of Paul and Zilla. Look at Chapter IV, section iii. Do you think Paul's complaints to Babbitt are the result of a temporary depression? Or do they express a far deeper, permanent dissatisfaction with his life? Support your answer with evidence from the text. Try especially to decide whether it is his wife or society that Paul is attacking. Or is it both? What is the connection between his wife's behavior and the values of Zenith upper-middle class society?
  - b. Later, Paul becomes unfaithful to Zilla and eventually wounds her with a pistol shot. Is this a probable end to their relationship? Do the consequent events concerning Paul and Zilla -- Paul's imprisonment and Zilla's religious conversion -- in any way comment on their former marriage?
  - c. How is the Paul-Zilla marriage used to portray certain characteristics of Babbitt? How does Babbitt's intervention in their marital problems allow the author to expose Babbitt?
  - d. Consider the marriage of George and Myra Babbitt. How does Babbitt think o



- his wife? How does Myra regard her husband? Does Lewis wish us to take their marriage as typical of middle-class American marriages? If so, what comment is Lewis making upon American attitudes towards marriage?
- e. Babbitt, like Paul, becomes unfaithful to his wife. Why does Babbitt become unfaithful? Can his action be defended? Why or why not? Is his seeking after pleasure in any way related to his seeking after fame and material gain?
  - f. Consider the courtships of Babbitt's two children. How do Ted and Verona differ in their views of marriage? Why does Lewis so contrive that both Ted and Verona get married before the end of the novel? Is either marriage an ideal one from Lewis' point of view? Supply evidence to support your position.
8. Throughout the novel, Lewis includes newspaper accounts, advertisements, and speeches given by Babbitt. What do these speeches, accounts, and advertisements share in common? What might be Lewis' purpose in including the language of all three kinds of presentation?
  9. In this novel, Lewis includes religious professionals such as Mike Monday and Doctor Drew. What is Lewis' view of the American church? of Sunday Schools? of American preachers? Does Lewis suggest that religion ought to be eradicated from American society?
  10. a. There are several formal problems in this novel. One of them is that, although the novel begins as an account of one day in the life of Babbitt, it soon becomes a series of essays on certain aspects of American culture, all of which are in some way related to Babbitt. Is Babbitt's character necessary for Lewis' satire of religious conventions, Sunday School, etc? Or could these objects be more effectively satirized without Babbitt's appearance?
  - b. Babbitt appears to change in the course of the novel. Is his change convincing? Why does Lewis have him change? Does his change allow Lewis to comment on American society? Why does Babbitt finally say, "They've licked me. They've licked me to the finish"?
  11. Let us assume that there are basically two satiric purposes: (1) to expose the faults and follies of a society in the hope that the society will see its faults and reform in accordance with the view of life implied by the author and (2) to expose the faults and follies of a society without offering an alternative pattern of action. Which kind of satire do we have in Babbitt? Do we learn from this novel Lewis' conception of the ideal society, the ideal man? Supply evidence to support your position. The answers to the foregoing questions should help you to answer the question, "Does Lewis see any hope for the modern American man?"

### III. THE GREAT GATSBY

The Great Gatsby was published in 1925, the reckless Twenties, a period in which Americans seemed to relax from the rigorous discipline necessitated by World War I. In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald portrays the society of the Prohibition era with its speakeasies; it is a society infused with a new wealth, captivated by new fads, entranced by the new automobiles, flushed with victory over Germany.

Fitzgerald seems to have been immensely attracted to wealth and the power and things it can purchase. But, he also has a distrust of wealth. In the novel you are going to read, you will discover perhaps to what extent he is attracted to wealth and to what extent he distrusts it. Even more, you may discover what moral and spiritual weaknesses Fitzgerald perceives in American society of the Twenties.

As you read this novel, keep in mind that Nick tells the story. The crucial question is, "Does Nick correctly judge Gatsby and his society?"

## A. STUDY QUESTIONS

### CHAPTER I

1. Look at the advice the narrator's father has given. Is there a hint of pride in this advice? Does this advice mean that one should never criticize? If one has to take into account the social-economic environment that a person has grown up in, can one ever criticize him? On what grounds?
2. Is the narrator being a bit proud in the opening paragraphs? Why the reference to his college career?
3. What does the narrator mean when he says that "reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope"? According to this view, what does one hope for?
4. If you find the narrator proud of his reservation of judgment, do you find him sympathetic at all? Point to particular words and sentences to support your position.
5. a. What is the limit of his suspending judgment? When must he begin to make judgments?  
 b. Consider the sentence: "Conduct may be founded on the hard rock...." What is the metaphor used here? As what is conduct regarded? Notice the words "founded," "hard rock," "wet marshes."  
 c. In the next sentence the narrator uses the words "in uniform" and "at moral attention." How would he have men conduct themselves?  
 d. Is there a contradiction between this statement and his father's advice? Is "riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart" another way of phrasing his father's advice?
6. a. Notice the paradoxical nature of the first sentence about Gatsby. If he scorns everything Gatsby stands for, how can he like him?  
 b. Now that we know the narrator, Nick, scorns everything that Gatsby stands for, Fitzgerald must somehow make his readers go along with Gatsby, one of the central characters in the novel. How will our knowledge of Nick's scorn affect our reaction to Gatsby when he is introduced? Would it not have been better if Fitzgerald had waited to let us know how Nick feels about Gatsby?  
 c. Study the clause "If personality is an unbroken series of gestures...." Do we normally define "personality" in this way? Notice that this sentence begins with a hypothetical premise: "If ... then". Does the construction of the sentence reveal anything about Nick's view of this definition of "personality"?  
 d. Does the comparison of Gatsby to a seismograph in any way inform us of Nick's attitude toward Gatsby? Why doesn't he compare Gatsby to something alive, something other than a machine? What does this comparison suggest about Gatsby?

7. Gatsby, according to Nick, "turned out all right at the end." Nick here is defending Gatsby. To what does he attribute Gatsby's tragedy? What is the "foul dust"? What might have "preyed" on Gatsby?
8. a. The title of this novel indicates that Gatsby should be its hero. Why, then, does Fitzgerald have Nick tell us about his past?  
b. What implicit judgments does Nick make about the Middle West and the East? Is there any indication that his views have changed during his life?  
c. Nick is from the Midwest, the scene of pioneering adventures. Is there something ironic about his becoming "a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler" in the East? Does this sentence in any way suggest how Nick sees the East? Notice the sentence, "I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with summer."
9. a. Who is Midas? Morgan? Maecenas? Do these allusions aid in our understanding of Nick's attitudes at this time in his career?  
b. How can life be "much more successfully looked at from a single window"? Would not more windows give one a better view? Why does he say "successfully" and not "more completely" or "better"?
10. a. Notice the Midwestern metaphor, "the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound." Does it have an ironic quality?  
b. What is the "egg in the Columbus story"?
11. Notice that Gatsby and Nick live in West Egg; the Buchanans in East Egg. Do the descriptions of the two Eggs contribute to the characterization of the various characters? That is, do the descriptions cause us to associate different things with the two sets of characters?
12. a. In the description of Tom as he looked at age thirty, is there anything to suggest how Fitzgerald views the relationship of wealth, especially inherited wealth, and moral character?  
b. Fitzgerald spends a good deal of time talking about the physical appearance and prowess of Tom. What, if any thing, does the physical description suggest about his moral and spiritual qualities?
13. a. What is Nick's first impression of the two women? How does he react to Miss Baker? Does her apparent failure to see him and her position on the couch suggest anything about her character?  
b. Notice Nick's description of Daisy's voice. Is there anything peculiar about the "promise" her voice carries?  
c. Do you believe Daisy when she says "I'm p-paralyzed with happiness"? Why or why not? Is there anything in the rest of the scene that supports your answer?  
d. What is Tom's attitude toward the East and, by implication, toward the Middle West? Might those attitudes in some way be significant?
14. a. What does Daisy's chatter about the longest day in the year indicate about her?  
b. Daisy and Miss Baker talk with "a bantering inconsequence" which is as "cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire." Does the diction of this sentence imply a judgment upon the two girls? What is that judgment? Who makes it?  
c. Why does Nick mention "the West"? How do eastern and western attitudes toward time and action differ?  
d. What does Tom's mentioning The Rise of the Colored Empires suggest about him? Is it a topic appropriate to the social situation? Does Tom have a critical mind? Does Daisy?
15. What about the comparison of Nick to a rose? Does this comparison comment



- more on Daisy or on Nick? Find evidence to support your contention.
16. Who is the "fifth guest" with "shrill metallic urgency"? Why does Nick want "to telephone immediately for the police"?
  17. a. Daisy says about her daughter, "I'm glad it's a girl, and I'll hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." Later, she says, "Sophisticated--lord, I'm sophisticated." From these statements and the passage in which they appear what can we infer about the values that direct Daisy's action and life?  
b. Does Nick's reaction to her statements imply a judgment upon Daisy? Upon her values? Upon Tom? Upon the society they represent?
  18. Why does Fitzgerald so contrive that Nick doesn't learn that Miss Baker is Jordan Baker before now? What suggestions about her past are there?
  19. As he leaves the Buchanan house, Nick is "confused and a little disgusted." Why should he be that way? What does he think of Tom? Of Daisy? Does his confusion and disgust suggest that he has a different set of values than the Buchanans? How do their values differ?
  20. Is there anything significant in the observation that Gatsby "gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone"?
  21. What about the "green light"? With whom is it associated? Whose dock is it?

## CHAPTER II

1. a. The chapter begins by describing a scene. What words and phrases does Fitzgerald use to suggest something about the East? Are there any judgments implicit in his passage?  
b. What about Doctor T. J. Eckleburg's eyes? What do these eyes do? Might they be symbolic of something just as the valley of ashes might be symbolic of something?  
c. What persons does Nick cause us to associate with the scene described?
2. Is there something incongruous about the place where Tom's mistress lives and his coming to see her? Does his having a mistress who lives in a rather desolate place suggest something about his outlook?
3. a. Nick says Mrs. Wilson walked "through her husband as if he were a ghost." Is this a comment on Mr. or Mrs. Wilson?  
b. Why is everything but Mrs. Wilson veiled by "a white ashen dust"?
4. a. What can we tell about Mrs. Wilson from Nick's description of her and her activities after they get to New York?  
b. The dog scene seems to have no purpose, but why might Fitzgerald have included it? Does it help us perceive something about Tom, Mrs. Wilson, or Nick? About all of them?
5. a. Look at the description of the apartment to which they go. Why the reference to Versailles? to the picture? to the magazines?  
b. Why does Nick tell us he ~~was~~ drunk only twice in his life? Is it just an irrelevant detail? Why should he get drunk on this afternoon?
6. Why does Fitzgerald create the characters, Catherine and Mr. McKee and his wife? Do they represent types or are they carefully drawn, individualized characters? Do the details included in the description do more than lend a kind of reality to their characters?
7. Is there anything significant in the sentence, "With the influence of the dress, her personality had also undergone a change"? Why does she seem to expand and the room shrink?
8. Why does Mrs. Wilson laugh pointlessly when she looks at Nick?



9. There is recorded a long conversation about love and marriage. Nick makes few comments and seems to be content to record the conversation. What are the characters' attitudes toward love and marriage? toward other people?
10. Nick says he "was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life." Is there any irony in that statement? If so, what does it suggest about his attitude toward the characters involved in the preceding scene?
11. Why does the little dog keep re-appearing in the narrative?
12. This whole scene appears confused, disorganized. We are never sure what is going on. Is it because Nick has had too much whiskey?

### CHAPTER III

1. a. The opening paragraphs of Chapter III represent Fitzgerald's prose at its best. We see this scene through Nick's eyes, and it is interesting not only to discover what Nick sees, but how he sees it. Why are the gardens "blue"? Why are there "men and girls," not "men and women"? Why are they compared to moths? Does such a comparison suggest anything about them? Why does he tell us about the oranges and lemons?
- b. Examine these paragraphs--through the one ending, "The party has begun." Are there words, phrases, and sentences in these paragraphs that indicate how Nick feels about the parties and the party-goers? Is there anything satirical intended when this description ends with the short sentence, "The party has begun"?
2. a. Explain the meaning of the phrase "with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission." Is there any hint of irony?
- b. Does Nick find the party exciting and entertaining? What does your answer to that question imply about the divergence between Nick's view of life and that of the guests? What one thing occupies the minds of the guests?
3. a. Nick again hears rumors about Gatsby. What had he heard before? Why haven't we met Gatsby yet? Does the statement in the early chapters about Gatsby's turning out all right and the "foul dust" help you explain Fitzgerald's method?
- b. Why is the owl-like bespectacled man so surprised to find real books in Gatsby's library? Does this scene in any way suggest a contrast between Gatsby and some other people?
- c. This party is given by Gatsby; he is the host. But he is nowhere to be found. That's rather odd isn't it, or is it?
4. a. Nick says that after two glasses of champagne, the scene changed "into something significant, elemental, profound." Is he being satirical when he makes this statement? What does this statement suggest about Nick's attitude toward the earlier scenes? the immediately succeeding one?
- b. Nick has much to say about Gatsby's smile and the way he talks. Why, when he isn't smiling, does Gatsby look like "an elegant young rough-neck"? Is there any implication that Gatsby is less than he seems? more than he appears?
- c. Again, Nick hears rumors about Gatsby's past. Why might Fitzgerald steadfastly refuse to tell us about Gatsby's past? Why does Nick find it comprehensible that Gatsby could have come from Louisiana or New York?
5. Is there anything ironical in Jordan's statement that small parties are "so intimate" and lacking in privacy? What does this suggest about Jordan, about

- Gatsby, about his guests?
6. Gatsby, according to Nick, remains aloof and rather detached from his guests. Does Nick also? Does Nick imply admiration for Gatsby? What does he seem to find attractive in Gatsby that is lacking in the other guests?
  7. Comment on the sentence, "She had a fight with a man who says he's her husband! Does it help us characterize the attitudes of the guests? Is the girl's crying while trying to sing funny? Why or why not? Is she really heart-broken or just overly sentimental? How do you know?"
  8. Note that "the eagerness in his / Gatsby's / manner tightened abruptly into formality as several people approached him to say good-by." Does this suggest how Gatsby regards his guests?
  9. The scene about a guest's car's losing its wheel seems irrelevant to the story. Might there be some reason for its inclusion?
  10. Examine the sentence that begins "A sudden emptiness seemed to flow...." Is this sentence essential to our understanding of Gatsby? Pay close attention to the kinds of words used here.
  11. Nick now interrupts the story. Why does he? Is it important that he tell us what he does daily? Can you discern what Nick's attitude is toward the people he works with? toward the strange women he meets on the street? toward the Yale Club? Does he feel at ease in this world?
  12. Nick says that "most affectations conceal something eventually, even though they don't at the beginning." Have his experiences supported the truth of this statement? Why might he say this about Jordan Baker?
  13. Is there anything significant about the fact that Nick feels he must break off his relationship with his girl-friend back home? Does this feeling in any way set him off from other people we have encountered in the novel?
  14. Why is the conversation about Jordan's driving included? Does it add to our understanding of her? of Nick?
  15. Notice the last paragraph in this chapter. Is Nick overly proud here, or is he being honest? Does this paragraph increase or decrease our sympathy for Nick?

#### CHAPTER IV

1. Why does this scene take place on Sunday? Why not Monday?
2. Why is it a "subtle tribute," on the part of the guests, to know "nothing whatever" about Gatsby?
  - b. Notice the names of the guests. Where are the Johnsons, the Millers, the Joneses?
  - c. How does he characterize some of the guests? Does his characterization comment on certain segments of society? How?
3. Nick comments on the way Gatsby balances himself on the dashboard of his car. He says it is "peculiarly American." Is there a hint of satire in this passage? What is being satirized? Is there any implication about how things should be?
4. How has Nick's view of Gatsby changed? Why? Does this paragraph somehow prepare us for a better understanding of Gatsby? Does it suggest that Gatsby also conceals something behind his affectation? What might he be concealing?
5. a. We now get a version of Gatsby's past from Gatsby. Why does Fitzgerald include such a scene?
  - b. Is it somehow significant that Gatsby was born in the Middle West? That he claims to have been educated at Oxford? Why does he say he was born

- in San Francisco?
- c. Does Nick believe Gatsby's story? Why or why not?
  - d. What is Gatsby's attitude toward the First World War? Does his statement about it suggest something about his previous life?
  - e. Is there anything noteworthy in Nick's comparison of Gatsby's story to "a dozen magazines"?
  - f. What about Gatsby's medals? Why might he carry them with him? Do they make his story more credible?
6. Nick describes some of the things he sees as they drive to New York. Why does he mention the "valley of ashes," Mrs. Wilson, the encounter with the policeman, the hearse, the Negroes? Why does he end this descriptive passage with "Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder"? What is Nick's attitude toward the things, people, and events he describes? Point to particular words, phrases, and sentences.
7. a. Does the scene with Mr. Wolfsheim teach us anything about Gatsby? about Nick? What exactly?
- b. Why are the nymphs "Presbyterian"?
- c. Why does Wolfsheim prefer the Metropole? Are his memories pleasant?
- d. How can one eat "with ferocious delicacy"? What kind of man wears cuff links made out of human molars?
- e. Is Fitzgerald in any way commenting on the American businessman?
- f. What do you think of Wolfsheim's understanding of Gatsby?
8. a. Why should Daisy own a "white roadster"? Why not a red one?
- b. What does this narrative about Daisy, Tom, and Jay add to our understanding of the novel? To our understanding of the plot? of the characters? Why hasn't this historical information been presented before now? Why not in the first chapter? Why not later?
9. Notice the song sung by the children. Does it comment upon some of the characters? Who is the Shiek of Araby? Whose love belongs to him? What do the last two lines suggest about how the story is going to work out?
10. Why does Nick describe Gatsby as being "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor"? What does this sentence indicate about Nick's feelings about Gatsby?
- b. Do we now understand why Gatsby had so many parties? Why he bought the house he did? Why he appears so often to be detached and isolated from his guests?
11. Is there anything significant about the phrase Nick remembers: "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired"? How would Thoreau view this remark?

## CHAPTER V

1. Why does Fitzgerald go to such lengths to portray Gatsby as a considerate man? As a man who doesn't wish to take advantage of others? Does this portrait separate Gatsby from other characters we have encountered?
2. Why should it be raining? Fitzgerald could make the sun shine, couldn't he?
3. Gatsby usually exhibits a flamboyant quality; he has never before been so nervous, so excited. Why the sudden change?
4. How does Nick react to the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy? What does this meeting reveal about the three characters involved?
5. Why does Nick tell us the history of Gatsby's house? Does this history fit into the theme of the novel?



6. Why has it suddenly stopped raining?
7. Does the fact that Gatsby had to work three years in order to buy the house suggest anything about the purpose for which he lives?
8. Notice Daisy's comment about Gatsby's shirts. Is it rather humorous? Would one expect this kind of remark from her? Why?
9. Gatsby mentions a "green light" at the end of the dock. Has it been mentioned before? Where? What might this green light represent to Gatsby? to Nick?
10. Why does Fitzgerald have certain songs played and sung?
11. Why is it raining again?

## CHAPTER VI

1. James Gatz is from North Dakota. Why not Rhode Island? Connecticut?
2. Where has Dan Cody been mentioned before? Who is he? Why is he significant in this story?
3. What is noteworthy about Gatsby's change of name? What does Nick mean when he says Gatsby "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself"? Notice the allusions to the Bible and to Christ. Are they ironic or straight? How? Is there any indication that Gatsby has deluded himself?
4. Notice the last clause of this section: "the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man." What does this statement mean in the context of the foregoing narrative?
5. How does this narrative satirize the American zeal for "getting ahead"?
6. Why is it necessary to have Tom and Gatsby encounter one another? How does this scene reveal the contrast between Gatsby and Tom?
7. Why does Daisy tell Nick to present a "green card," not one of another color?
8. Notice Nick's description of West Egg in the paragraph beginning, "But the rest offended her...." What does Nick understand that Daisy fails to?
9. Is Gatsby realistic in his plans about his proposed marriage to Daisy? Do we expect Gatsby to make such a proposal? In what sense does Gatsby live in the past rather than the future?
10. Consider the clause: "...and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder." Does this statement give us more insight into Gatsby? into his view of life?
11. Consider the following paragraph. How does this paragraph point up the discrepancy between Gatsby's dream and the world in which he lives?
12. How does Nick react to his conversation with Gatsby? What phrase might he be trying to say? "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired"? or something else? Whatever he is trying to say, how would it comment on Gatsby?

## CHAPTER VII

1. Who is Trimalchio? Try to find out. Why is the allusion to Trimalchio appropriate at this point?
2. Why has Gatsby allowed his house to run down? Why does Nick say, "So the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval of her eyes"?
3. Why does Fitzgerald include the scene on the train? Why should the weather be so hot? How does the Buchanan house offer a contrast? Why should Tom talk about the sun growing hotter and hotter?



4. Jordan says, "Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall." Earlier Nick has said, "... I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer." Do these two contradictory statements suggest anything?
5. To what "advertisement of the man" might Daisy be referring? Does this suggest something about Fitzgerald's view of Gatsby? of the other characters?
6. What does Gatsby mean when he says Daisy's voice is full of money?
7. Why does Gatsby's car have green leather on the seats?
8. What do Doctor T. J. Eckelburg's eyes have to do with anything?
9. Why is Wilson's face green? Is there any significance in Wilson and his wife's wanting to go West?
10. Why does Nick say, "... it occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well"? Who is sick? Who is well?
11. How does Nick regard Tom now? What is wrong with Tom?
12. How is Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" related to anything? Why are the chords called "portentous"?
13. Why does Tom see "himself standing above on the last barrier of civilization"? Why does Jordan then say "we're all white here"?
14. What does Nick mean when he says, "The transition from libertine to prig was so complete"? Why does he feel angry?
15. Why is Tom compared to a clergyman?
16. Why does Daisy say, "You're revolting"? What is "thrilling scorn"?
17. Look at the sentence, "From the ballroom beneath, muffled and suffocating chords were drifting up on hot waves of air." Explain why Fitzgerald chose the words "muffled," "suffocating," "hot."
18. What is the "unfamiliar but recognizable look" that comes over Gatsby's face? Why does Nick think Gatsby looks "as if he had killed a man"?
19. What do the words "dead dream" refer to?
20. What is "magnanimous scorn"? How does it differ from "thrilling scorn"?
21. What has Nick's birthday to do with anything?
22. How do Daisy and Jordan differ according to Nick?
23. Why does Nick say, "So we drove on toward death...."? Does Fitzgerald wish to give away the rest of the story? Or may "death" have more than one meaning here?
24. Why is the car that killed Myrtle "light green"? Or was it? Who is driving the "death car"? Is there any irony here? Why did Myrtle run out into the road?
25. Why does Nick say, "... and suddenly that included Jordan too"? Why does he later say he dislikes Gatsby as well? What do these two statements reveal about Nick's character? What does he find wrong with these people?
26. What color suit does Gatsby have on? What color glow appears in Daisy's window?
27. Why does Nick say, "... watching over nothing"? Are these words important in any way?

#### CHAPTER VIII

1. Notice that Nick "tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams." Why is reality "grotesque"? Why the contrast of such a reality and the dreams?

2. Why does Nick compare Jay Gatsby to a glass being broken by Tom?
3. Why "might" Gatsby have despised himself? Why doesn't he? Why does Nick say "he had committed himself to the following of a grail?" What is a "grail?"
4. Why is Daisy's world called "artificial"? Why is the universe a "twilight" one?
5. How does Gatsby feel when he returns to Louisville? Is there any indication of a moral judgment against him?
6. What does Nick tell Gatsby as he leaves? What does his farewell mean? Why is his dream "incorruptible"?
7. Why is it necessary that we have this scene with George and Michaelis?
8. Why does George look at the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg? Does Wilson's statement, "God sees everything," have to do with the Doctor's eyes? Or why doesn't it?
9. Explain the significance of the sentence beginning, "If that was true he must have felt...." Do the same for the rest of this paragraph.
10. Why does Nick call these events a "holocaust"?

#### CHAPTER IX

1. What is a "racy pasquinade"? Why does Fitzgerald use this particular term?
2. Why does Fitzgerald so contrive that Daisy and Tom have gone?
3. Why does Nick begin "to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all"? Does this mean that Nick finds Gatsby completely acceptable? Are there any indications in the novel that he does not? How then can you explain his faithfulness to Gatsby?
4. Examine Wolfsheim's letter. What do you think of his grief? Is he sincere? Why or why not?
5. What is the reaction of Mr. Gatz to Gatsby's death? to the house? How do you account for the latter reaction?
6. Why does Mr. Gatz want his son buried in the East? Is this wish connected to any theme in this novel? How?
7. Characterize Mr. Klipspringer. What kind of man is he? Is he similar to Mr. Wolfsheim?
8. What is the significance of the "schedule" and the "General Resolves"? Is Fitzgerald satirizing something in this passage?
9. Notice the sentence, "Nobody came." Why does Fitzgerald put this short sentence at the end of this paragraph?
10. The story of Gatsby is now over. Why then do we find Nick telling us about memories of a decade earlier, memories that apparently are unrelated to Gatsby?
11. What attracts Nick to the Middle West? Why does Nick point out that the important characters in the story are Westerners? What does Nick find wrong with the East? What kind of pictures did El Greco paint?
12. Why does Nick include the scene with Jordan Baker? The one with Tom? How do these scenes allow Fitzgerald to make moral judgments upon Jordan, Tom, Nick? What moral judgments does he make?
13. How does Nick reveal his character when he says that Tom is "rid of my provincial squeamishness forever"?
14. Why are the houses called "inessential"? Why does Nick say, "a fresh green breast of the new world"? Why does Nick use the words "last and greatest" when he talks to Gatsby's dream?

15. How do the last two paragraphs summarize this novel? Notice the reference to the green light, to the future, to the past. What do you expect to come after the phrase, "And one fine morning--"? Why doesn't he complete the sentence? What has the last sentence to do with anything? Is it optimistic or pessimistic?

#### B. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does the definition of "personality" in the first few pages help to explain the way in which Fitzgerald portrays his characters? If so, give several examples. If not, provide examples that show it does not.
2. Much of the first chapter is devoted to Nick's telling us about himself. Why doesn't Fitzgerald launch into the story without all this apparently irrelevant material? Why does Fitzgerald create Nick and use him as a narrator? Could not the story be told just as effectively without Nick's narrating it?
3. Is there any indication of a conflict in the views of life held by the characters? Does the West-East dichotomy contribute to our perceiving such a difference, if there is one?
4. Is there any satire in the first chapter? If there is, what is its object? If there is no satire, then account for Nick's "confusion and disgust" as he leaves Tom and Daisy's house.
5. What function does the dog have in Chapter II? Its biscuit "decomposed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon." Can this observation be used to define the theme of this chapter?
6. In Chapter II, what is Nick's attitude toward the goings-on in New York? How do we know what his attitude is? Does it help us to figure out what Fitzgerald finds wrong with certain segments of American society? (What segment does he satirize?) What attitudes and patterns of actions?
7. Mrs. Wilson probably receives more attention than anyone else in Chapter II. For what purpose has Fitzgerald created her?
8. At one place in his narrative about the party in Chapter III Nick says, "East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety." What is "spectroscopic gaiety"? Why does Nick keep referring to geography and to East and West? Do these references in any way contribute to the satire of certain people? to our understanding of Fitzgerald's point of view?
9. We normally would expect a change in point of view--as in Chapter III when Nick breaks off the narration to tell us about his daily life--to begin a new chapter, but that doesn't happen here. Why not? Does this passage in any way help us to figure out Nick's attitude toward the three events he has described?
10. Two people receive most of Nick's attention, Jordan Baker and Gatsby. Why these two? Are they in any way alike? What does he find so interesting about them? Does your answer to the preceding question aid in formulating a view of Nick's character, his values, his view of life?
11. Chapter IV represents a departure from the previous three chapters. How is it different? Can you account for its difference? Most of the information in this chapter might have come somewhere else. Why doesn't it?
12. If you were to state in one sentence the theme of Chapter IV, what would you say? Does your statement account for the list of guests, Mr. Wolfsheim, Gatsby's account of his past, Jordan's telling about Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom?



13. The whole of Chapter V is devoted to the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy. Look at the third paragraph from the end. Do Nick's observations help us interpret the foregoing events in this chapter?
14. Much of Chapter V has to do with Gatsby's house. What importance does it assume in this chapter? Is Fitzgerald satirizing anything in this chapter?
15. In The Great Gatsby there is a good deal of violence. Does Fitzgerald include the violence for its sensationalism? Is there any reason that Mrs. Wilson and Gatsby must die a violent death? Would not a natural death for each be just as appropriate? Why might Fitzgerald find it necessary to include in his novel scenes which depict the unfaithfulness of married men and women?
16. One of the problems with this novel is that the title leads us to believe that Gatsby is the hero, but when we read the novel, we discover that we know more with certainty about Nick and that we see everything from Nick's point of view. Who is the hero of this novel? Perhaps it is necessary first to define "hero" and then attempt to determine who best fits that definition.
17. In the first chapter, Nick says that Gatsby "turned out all right." Do you agree with Nick's judgment? Or do you think Nick is in error?
18. One of the characteristics of the picaresque or "journey" novel is that the author exposes the follies and faults of a society by showing how the society mistreats its hero. Does Fitzgerald use the same technique? Is Gatsby more sinned against than sinning? Is Nick?
19. In a satirical work, an author sometimes not only exposes what he perceives to be wrong in a society, but also offers a method of reform. Does Fitzgerald imply in this novel something that is preferable to the society that he depicts? What is it? Do you agree with Fitzgerald?
20. In the Overview of this unit, it was said that each of the authors included in this unit depicts society as hell. Is that statement true of Fitzgerald? Or does he see society as a paradise?

#### IV. The Waste Land

##### A. Introduction

##### General Comments

The Waste Land is so complex that the reader who wishes to understand it, and not merely read the words of the poem, must put a great deal of effort into this study. Those who have worked at understanding suggest, however, that their effort has not been in vain, and some tell us that Eliot's poem is one of the greatest poems of our own century. Eliot's poetry combines a mastery of language and of techniques with a profound knowledge of the traditions of earlier English poetry. Using this skill and knowledge, Eliot writes a poem about the world of modern man, particularly about man's alienation from himself in the materialistic twentieth century. He raises the question, "How does man, if he can, gain a renewed spiritual vitality amid the stone and steel and smoke of contemporary civilization?" In writing this poem Eliot draws on his own experiences in London and, to a lesser extent, in Switzerland. In Switzerland, thanks to a loan from a friend, Eliot finished the poem, and he refers to Switzerland in the poem. "The Waters of Lemman," for example, mentioned in the third part of the poem, refers to Lake Geneva. Most of the setting for The Waste Land is one of the oldest sections of London. Eliot knew this part of the city quite well, for while he



was composing the first draft of "The Waste Land", he earned his living there as a clerk in a bank.

The poem might be read as the spiritual history of one day in the life of a clerk. The seemingly unconnected snatches of scenes, conversations, speculations, the allusions to poems, plays, the Bible, and history-- these all constitute thoughts passing through the mind of the clerk as he lives out his day. But the poem is tied to one place and one time by the activities associated with that part of the city. Unless one knows something about London and the life of the English clerk, he may easily miss many of these unifying references.

## 2. London as a Unifying Reference for the Poem

The clerk in London is as common a sight on the street as the modern American "business man" is on a Manhattan street at noon on a wash day. Unlike our "business man", who is said to be stereotyped by his gray flannel suit, the English clerk wears a pince-nez, a black suit, a stiffly starched collar, and a bowler and carries, along with his umbrella, a newspaper and briefcase. He disappears into the heart of the city each morning and re-emerges from it at evening.

His critics accuse him of dullness. His ideas, dreams, and past, his critics say, are standardized. Physically and spiritually, they say, any one clerk resembles any of the thousands of other clerks who wear out their lives in the corners of the dusty banks and office buildings of the city's financial district. Eliot's narrator appears to be such a man.

In Part I of the poem Eliot perhaps portrays the thoughts of a clerk as he marches off in the morning to join the army of office men that crosses London Bridge every morning of the working week, every week of the year. The Tube (as the English call the subway) and the bus lines collect the men from other parts of the city. In winter, when the dawn comes late, the clerks cross London bridge in a half-light. Often they appear mantled in the thick and gloomy and brown fog created by the mist rising off the Thames and the soot of soft-coal smoke from London's chimneys. On a cold, foggy winter morning, the view of London from the bridge may well cause the observer to imagine he is seeing an "unreal" city. Since sooty air is difficult to breathe "sighs, short and infrequent" are not unusual. "Each man fixed his eyes before his feet" according to Eliot; the business of crossing the crowded bridge in the morning is a serious one. The Church of St. Mary Woolnoth lies on Lombard Street, across from England's famous Lloyd's Bank. "The final stroke of nine," that rings out from the Church bells, indicates the beginning of another working day.

Part II of the poem which narrates the typical amorous adventures of a young English working woman may be a speculation, perhaps a train of thought, that follows an overheard chat or comment as the clerk passes the desk of a secretary.

"The Fire Sermon," or Part III of the poem, seems to take place during the lunch hour when the clerk sees the dirty Thames and its rubbish which suggest other people and events to him. The one-eyed merchant, Mr. Eugenides, may be a business acquaintance; Mr. Eugenides and the clerk consider luncheon at the Canon Street Hotel, a commercial restaurant near the bank and the subway. Apparently, Mr. Eugenides proposes that he and the clerk spend a week at the seaside resort

of Brighton, the location of the Metropole Hotel much favored by men of commerce.

At the "violet hour," when the clerk's business day ends, he glances at the clock as if he were "a human engine," a robot. The working day has transformed him into a kind of business machine that obeys orders, adds and subtracts columns of figures, and dispenses commands. As he leaves the office, he thinks once more of the amorous working girls. In his imagination he visits their apartments, watches them eat, sees them meet their lovers, listens to their conversations.

As the clerk begins his journey home, he walks along Queen Victoria Street, glancing at the Church of Magnus Martyr which, unlike the businessman's church of St. Mary Woolnoth, is a place of worship for the laboring men, particularly men who work along the river. He looks again at the river, and once more his imagination shapes images out of what he sees. The sound of bells coming over the water turns his thoughts to the nymphs that, according to the folklore and poetry of England, once played chastely upon the banks of the river and to the river's modern nymphs—who are not so innocent.

In Section IV of the poem, the river brings the sea to mind. The clerk dreams of a drowned sailor who is as dead as the men of London—"drowned" by a civilization concerned with "profit and loss" rather than humane values. "Let the dead sailor be a warning to the modern man," he thinks.

The final part of *The Waste Land* more or less summarizes its previous sections. The clerk rides the subway; its dark and dry tunnels of concrete suggest a desert waste land; and the waste land, in turn, symbolizes the spiritual state of the clerk's own soul. There is no silence in the subway, and he may not sit or stand. His imagined desert, too, is full of noise, and the wanderer cannot sit or stand it. As the train roars along, the clerk believes that the earth is ripping apart above him, that cities and civilizations are crumbling. In his imagination, men's ancient cities burst. He thinks of the two churches he has seen that day. The sterile church of the business man lies at the top of the hill surrounded by banks and near the entrance to the subway; it is a "decayed hole in the mountains" of the waste land. He imagines it as the devil's church, at the service of the merchant; it is a church whose congregation has forgotten that Christianity and the "profit and loss" philosophy of business contradict one another. He imagines bats on its darkened walls, its cisterns (of grace) empty, and evil women its priestesses. The church of Magnus Martyr, away from the banking homes, closer to the water, is closer to the lives of the working people. St. Magnus church, in effect, symbolizes salvation in the mind of the clerk. It is an oasis in the waste land. Here there is water and salvation.

As you read through the poem for the first time, see if you can determine if what the clerk sees and hears are symbols for his spiritual state.

After you have completed your first reading of the poem, answering the questions as carefully as possible; a second essay and a second series of questions will attempt to lead you to a better understanding of Eliot's techniques.

## B. Questions for a First Reading

## I. "The Burial of the Dead":

There are two "speakers" in the first 18 lines of the poem. Each speaker is, perhaps, only a "voice" different in the narrator's imagination. The poem takes place in the mind of a single narrator who is contemplating or daydreaming about the world and himself. The first speaker ends his comment with line 7.

1. What month is it? Why is it called the "cruellest month"?
2. Why does the speaker seem to fear spring? What change should occur within him as the seasons change? Notice that the speaker talks about "memory and desire." How are they related to spring?
3. Why did the speaker like winter? What was his spiritual condition during the winter?
4. With line 8, the second speaker begins to talk. He remembers Germany as speaks nostalgically of places dear to his heart, the Starnbergersee and the Hofgarten. Is the speaker a young man or a young woman? How can you tell?
5. What part of life--childhood or adulthood--does the speaker remember? What incident is remembered?
6. Is the speaker a settled person or a wanderer? What is the evidence for your answer?
7. Do you think the speaker is happy now? In order to determine your answer refer to your answers to question 5 and 6 just above, and to the tone of line 18.

In the next section of the poem, from lines 19 to 42, we once more find two speakers. These are not the same two speakers introduced in lines 1-18, although all speakers are creations of the narrator's mind.

8. Line 19 is an imaginative picture of a desert as a waste land. It is a symbol for the spiritual condition of the clerk. Compare the passage in "Ezekiel" below with lines 19 to 30. God speaks to the prophet, Ezekiel:

"And he said unto me, 'Son of man, stand thee upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.' And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, 'Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them and thou shalt stay with them,' thus saith the Lord God. 'And they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.'" (Ez. 2:1-6)

Who, in the poem, might be talking to the speaker? If you don't know, compare line 19-21 with the first lines in the quotation from Ezekiel.



9. Why is being shadowless like death? What is lost at death, at least as a Christian views it? What will be lost if the speaker stands by the red rock?
10. The Anglican funeral service reminds Christians that man's body is nothing but dust. In what sense might there be "fear in a handful of dust"? Fear of what? What does "fear" mean in this line? It can mean two things.
11. According to Ezekiel, men are like scorpions, and the words of men like briars and thorns. To be among them is like being in a waste land. The narrator of the poem also feels he is in a waste land. That is, he is in a civilization where men are like scorpions, their words like briars. How has the narrator arrived at the feeling of being in a waste land? In determining your answer, look over your answers to the questions asked about lines 1-18. What in nature has awakened the narrator's spiritual sense? What memory has awakened his feeling of isolation, loneliness and rootlessness?
12. Where is God sending Ezekiel and why? To whom do you think the poet is being sent? To us--to our civilization? Could our civilization be a rebellious one? In what sense?
13. In lines 31-42, another speaker appears in the poem again. Lines 31-34 are from Tristram and Isolde, an opera by Wagner. "Where do you spend your time, my Irish child. The wind blows fresh from the homeland" is a translation of the German. This bit of opera leads the speaker to identify himself with a young girl: What flower does her lover give the girl? What might this scene have to do with anything?
14. In what sense is loving like dying? Look closely at lines 39-40 in formulating your answer.
15. Line 42 is a quotation from Tristram and Isolde, meaning "empty and blank the sea." This is what Tristram cries when he lies dying and looks out on the sea, waiting for his lover to return. What can we surmise about the speaker's love affair? Has it ended happily? Could line 42 refer to a waste land, as wild as an empty sea? Do you believe the speaker thinks permanent happiness can be found in love?
16. What is the profession of the Madame Sosostriis who is mentioned in line 43? What kind of cards is she using? If you do not know, look up the word "tarot" in a dictionary or encyclopedia. Is Madame a good spiritual adviser? How do you know? Who is the "Hanged Man"? Is it significant that she can't find him? Is she really wise?  
 [A spiritual concern for himself has awakened in the narrator's soul. He has found in himself a waste land, a dryness and fear, because he must live with spiritually dead men. In an attempt to escape from this spiritual crisis, the narrator turns to the memory of the love affair with the hyacinth-girl; but like Tristram's love for Isolde, this one is futile. Another escape is the phony religion of Madame Sosostriis. Yet this solution seems to fail too, because the narrator, in lines 60-76, once again finds himself in a waste land.]
17. What is the name of the "unreal City"? What time of day does the speaker see it? What is the season? Why does the city look "unreal"?
18. In what sense are the people crowding across London bridge "dead"? If they are dead, where may they be going?
19. What kind of sound does the clock make? Why does Eliot mention it?
20. What happened at Mylae? If you don't know, look up the "Mylae" in an encyclopedia. Having found this out, what opinion does the speaker have of Stetson, do you think?
21. In some ancient pagan civilizations, it was the custom to sacrifice men or animals in the spring to the goddess "Earth." It was thought that unless the



earth goddess was appeased, she would not bring forth fruit. The clerk's imagination transforms Stetson's familiar face into the face of a pagan, perhaps a priest of some dark rite of spring and fertility whose origin is buried somewhere in the prehistoric time. What did Stetson bury in his garden? When? What does the speaker want to know about it? What two things does he fear may interfere with what Stetson has planted in the garden?

22. The dog is a "friend to man," yet he may dig up the corpse. Therefore, he must be kept away from the grave. In other words, the speaker indicates a fear of the dead and of some kind of "rising." Where else in the poem is there a fear of death? of rising?
23. "Vous! hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable--mon frere! This means: "You! hypocrite reader--my shadow--my brother!" Who is the "you"? What is the narrator's attitude toward the "you"?

## II. "A Game of Chess":

1. What is the scene being described by the speaker in lines 77-102?
2. What is the subject of the picture above the mantle? The light in the room is called "sad". Is the legend of Philomel also sad? If you don't know the legend of Philomel, look it up in Ovid's Metamorphoses. What value does Philomel stand for in this myth?
3. Is the speaker in lines 77-102 primarily concerned with the sensual or the spiritual? Is this section of the poem, then, set in ironic contrast with the previous section of the poem? Why? Has the previous section of the poem been primarily concerned with the spiritual or the sensual?
4. The first lines in the "Game of Chess" part of the Waste Land bring to mind a famous description in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Enobarbus says of Cleopatra:

"I will tell you. The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that  
The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
It beggar'd all description. She did lie  
In her pavilion, cloth of gold and tissue,  
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature. On each side her  
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling cupids,  
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem  
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,  
And what they undid did."

Compare the speaker's description with Shakespeare's. How closely has Eliot retained the images, the mood, the diction of Shakespeare?

5. Does the mood of the speaker (who is, remember, simply an aspect of the clerk's consciousness) change in line 103? How can you tell? Does the picture of Philomel, for example, still seem beautiful? What are the "withered stumps of time"? Do material things in the room still seem beautiful to the speaker?
6. What is the woman doing?

7. The footsteps shuffle on the stair. Then we overhear a conversation between the woman and a man. Is the woman happy? Why not?
8. What is the man thinking? How do his thoughts fit in with the theme in "The Burial of the Dead"?
9. Why is the woman afraid of the wind? In answering this question, recall what her companion has just said. How does the man answer her?
10. Why is the word "nothing" particularly appropriate for the theme of The Waste Land? Who knows nothing, sees nothing, remembers nothing in "The Burial of the Dead" and in "A Game of Chess"?
11. What one image does the woman remember? Where does the man with eyes of pearl appear in "The Burial of the Dead"? Is the word "pearl" significant?
12. What is a "rag"? Why is it ironical to speak of Shakespeare's songs as Shakespearian rags?
13. In line 132, the woman, in frustration and boredom, thinks she will walk the streets with her hair down. In other words, she will sell herself to whatever man chance happens to bring along. She won't do this for money, but for "thrills." Her life, so full of "nothing," is an aimless existence. She is spiritually dead, totally devoted (as was Cleopatra) to what? She will sell for, or out of a need for what? How do we know that this modern Cleopatra is, after all, not a poor woman?
14. The narrator now becomes still another speaker in line 139. "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME" is a common sentence in the English "pub" or barroom, and the keeper very strictly enforces closing times for the pubs. Usually, the pub keeper must drive his customers out the door. Is the conversation in the pub going on between two men or two women? How can you tell? What are the subjects of conversation? How long has Albert been in the army? Is his marriage to Lil a happy one? Why or why not?
15. One of the women has taken pills "to bring it off." She means, when she was pregnant she took pills to cause her to lose the baby she was carrying. What happened to her afterward?
16. Compare the woman who speaks in the pub with the modern Cleopatra in the first part of "A Game of Chess." The first woman is a member of the lower class; the modern Cleopatra belongs to the upper class. In what way is their spiritual state the same?

### III. The Fire Sermon

1. What's the location or "setting," for the first part of "The Fire Sermon" (to line 205)? If the wind is unheard, how does the speaker know it is blowing?
2. Traditionally, the banks of the Thames serve as the home of nymphs. These mythological creatures are celebrated throughout English poetry. But in modern England, the speaker claims, the traditional nymphs have departed from the banks of the river. What new "nymphs" have taken their place? Does this new type of nymph live by the river? Why or why not? What does the speaker say?
3. The rattle of bones and the awareness of the rat emphasizes what theme that the poem has consistently treated up to this point?
4. After the speaker has dreamingly mused on the ancient nymphs of the Thames and then has been shocked back to the ugliness of the present by the bitter reflection that the "modern" nymphs have departed, he dreams once more (line 171). He identifies himself with Prospero of Shakespeare's The Tempest.

Prospero, formerly a king, has been driven into exile by his brother, Alonso, who has usurped Prospero's throne for himself. Prospero is, however, a powerful figure in exile; his marvelous imagination and deep learning allow him to control nature. The speaker in the part of The Waste Land uses his imagination to escape from the grim world of the present. For a minute, as he fishes behind the gas house, a plant where gas is produced, he imagines he is Prospero and thinks of his dead father and dead brother. Prospero's father is physically dead; his brother is spiritually dead. Knowing this, do you suppose the bones mentioned in line 194 refer to physical or spiritual death? Is the speaker referring to his own father and brother, or to all men?

5. Once again the speaker is shocked out of his musing and back to the present. What does he hear? Who is Sweetest? What is he going to do?
6. What do Mrs. Porter and her daughter do? Is this a significant act?
7. The speaker, retreating into his imagination, hears the voice of children singing in a choir. "And, oh those children's voices, singing from on high in the church!" Is the purity of the children different from the purity of Mrs. Porter and her daughter? How?
8. To what does "Jug, jug, . . ." refer? Where have we heard that sound before in the poem?
9. Where before in the poem has an unreal city, line 207, been mentioned?
10. Where has a merchant appeared previously in the poem? Is he partially blind?
11. In line 207-214 is the speaker concerned with an imaginary, dreamed-of world, or with "reality"? Is there anything spiritually significant about the "real" world as these lines treat it?
12. Read lines 215-256 again. What is the setting for this part of the poem? Who is the major character the speaker describes? What is her occupation?
13. The speaker for the narrator is Tiresias. Who is Tiresias? If you don't know, refer to the Iliad or to an encyclopedia of mythology. What does Tiresias do in Oedipus (Tragedy, grade 10) or in the Odyssey (Epic, grade 9).
14. Why does the young man come to the girl's apartment? What is his occupation? What would he like his occupation to be? Does she love him, or is she bored with him?
15. "The world of the girl is purely mechanical and spiritually a dead one." Support this statement from the text.
16. Compare this girl with the other women in the poem. In what ways are they all alike?
17. Why does the image of Magnus Martyr church in line 264-6 jar with the remarks in the lines just above it? What does the church symbolize? How does the word "Ionian" broaden the idea of the church?
18. "Elizabeth and Leicester" refers to Queen Elizabeth I and one of her favorite courtiers, Lord Leicester. Compare the sight of the river during Elizabeth's time with the sight of the river in the twentieth century. How has industrialism changed the river?
19. Lines 292-305 treat the thoughts of two different speakers. Each is a woman of loose virtue; each allows a man to make love to her, and each associates this experience with the river Thames. Why could the first girl make "no comment"? Does she love the man who makes love to her? Compare her attitude with the attitude of the typist earlier in Part III.
20. To what class does the second girl belong? Her speech begins with line 300. How do you know? Compare her use of the word "nothing" with the modern Cleopatra's use of it in "A Game of Chess" section of the poem. Is there any important spiritual difference between the rich girl and the poor one?



21. Lines 307-310 are quotations from St. Augustine's Confessions, a book in which he describes (as if he were conversing with God) the process of his conversion to Christianity after years of debauched living. The "burning" Augustine speaks of means, in the first part of the book, the burning of concupiscible desires. But later in the book, he uses "burning" to express the character of his love for God. Just as his flesh was once on fire with lust, his heart burns eventually with the love of God. What effect does this quotation from Augustine have, coming as it does at the end of these sensuous reveries?

#### IV. Death By Water

1. Where has the Phoenician sailor appeared before in the poem?
2. What does the drowned sailor forget? What does he pass?
3. Consider the speaker's advice to sailors. What effect will such advice have upon them? Will it, for example, change their attitude toward profit and loss? Why does the speaker mean the advice just for sailors, or for all men? Defend your answer by showing how the poem, up to this point, supports your answer. Look up I Corinthians 12:13.

#### V. What the Thunder Said

1. Lines 328-330 describe, in part, Christ's agony in the Garden on The Mount of Olive. The event took place before he was crucified. Knowing this, how do you interpret lines 328-330? Who is the "we" referred to in line 329? Are the figures in this poem dying because they cannot find a spiritual life? Prove your answer by finding evidence in the text of the poem up to line 330.
2. Where else in the poem has the image of desert appeared?
3. Describe the situation of man in a spiritual desert. What can he not do? What, above all, does he want? Why is even solitude impossible in the desert?
4. What confusion does the desert wanderer experience in lines 360-6? How can you naturally explain such confusion? In other words, why is it a rather common experience for travelers to experience this type of confusion in the desert?
5. Lines 360-6 also refer to an incident that occurred after the Resurrection of Christ from the tomb. "And, behold, two of them (his disciples) went that same day (of Christ's resurrection) to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. And they talked of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." (Luke 24:13-16) The death of Christ symbolized in the first part of "What the Thunder Said" is like the agony the speaker experiences as he wanders through a spiritual waste land. The speaker feels an interior dryness, as he looks about his world of spiritually dead or dying people, and he can find no relief. In the second part of "What the Thunder Said," the Resurrection of Christ becomes important. The Resurrection destroys, in the mind of the speaker, the last lingering attraction he may feel toward the modern world. The unreal cities, mentioned previously in the poem, become unreal ruins. This distinction symbolizes the fact that the narrator no longer even hopes that they are, or will be, spiritually significant. The names of the cities in 375-6 correspond to the cultures that founded them. What culture does each city represent?



- When did these cultures flourish? Can we say, then, that the spiritual decay treated in the poem is a product of a single time or a single culture?
6. Lines 378-385 present the most desolate aspect of the waste land. The images in these lines express decay and evil, a vision of hell. The woman with long black hair is a witch who symbolizes womanliness in its most depraved state. How is the world of nature mocked?
  7. In what way do lines 386-400 present a hopeful picture? If the spiritual waste land in the soul of the speaker represents spiritual dryness and despair, what does the rain symbolize? How does the speaker regard the dry bones? Does this contrast with his previous attitudes toward the bone?
  8. The commands "Datta, Dayadhvaam, and Damyata in lines 401-423, mean, respectively, "give, sympathize, and control." What does the speaker mean by "an age of prudence"? What information is not to be found in obituaries, or on spider-webbed tomb stones, or in wills that solicitors (lawyers) read?
  9. If the soul is the prisoner, what is the prison? Coriolanus was a politician who lost the faith of his followers and was imprisoned. In what way does the man who feels a spiritual waste land within himself resemble Coriolanus?
  10. The command, Damyata (control), is expressed by the image of a boat. The boat symbolizes the human body and the sailor represents the soul. Where else in the poem is sea imagery used? How does this reference contrast to previous images; why, in other words, is this image hopeful, even joyous, while previous sea images have carried a connotation of despair?
  11. What is the speaker doing in lines 424-434? Is he still in the waste land, or is it behind him?
  12. What evidence is there in these lines that the speaker is unconcerned about material things, unconcerned even about his civilization?
  13. a. "Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina" means "Then he dives back into the fire which refines them." This quotation is from Dante's Inferno, a poem in which the poet Dante describes a visit to hell. What "fire" do you think the speaker has endured? Is his ordeal a saving experience or not? Why? Has it ended? Or is such an ordeal a continuing process?  
 b. "Quando fiam chelidon"--means "when will I be like the swallow." In some versions of the Philomel story she becomes a swallow instead of a nightingale. With what season are swallows usually associated? Does this have any relation to the first line of the poem?
  14. "The prince of Aquitaine at the ruined tower," is the meaning of the quotation in line 430. Where else have towers been mentioned in the poem? Is this quotation still another example of the speaker's disdain for civilization?
  15. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" may refer to the fragments of poetry the author has put together in this poem to sustain a kind of peace in his soul. He has been alienated from the world. What does this quotation, then, imply about the speaker's view of poetry? Is poetry valuable?
  16. Hieronymo is a character in a 16th century English play, Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy. Hieronymo's madness, like Hamlet's perhaps, is a spiritual sanity; he lives in an evil world, a world that has killed his only son. Has the disjointed, often confusing, spiritual journey of the narrator (in his many guises) seemed like madness? How is the poet justifying the poem's "unreasonableness"? Does the poem, therefore, end hopefully?

### C. Toward an Even Better Understanding

In The Waste Land, Eliot investigates a world that is spiritually meaningless. He is interested in analyzing the way modern people think, how they can go on living unexciting, boring lives. It would be easy for Eliot to describe "modern" man by saying, "He is bored" or "He is angry" or "He doesn't care about anything," but to do so would not lead to a very good understanding of why people are that way. Besides, oftentimes our feelings and emotions are evoked by a particular setting, the kind of weather, the season of the year. A particular setting and time, a school building,--for example; if seen in early August on the way to the swimming pool, may change joy to foreboding sorrow. So Eliot in order to portray the spiritual life of modern man carefully describes settings, carefully tells us what time of year it is, informs us whether the sun beats down mercilessly or there are clouds, thunder, lightening, and rain.

Eliot also wants his reader to experience precisely the same reaction to scenes and characters that his narrator experiences. If he is going to be able to do that, he will have to write poetry that differs from "It takes a heap of living to make a house a home." When we read that line, we don't know exactly what the author means. Some of us may have discovered that a "heap of living" makes a house a hell; some, that it makes a house a heaven. Eliot can't afford to be so ambiguous. So he works hard and carefully to make sure we react exactly the way he wants us to. That is, he very carefully chooses words that evoke in us only one kind of feeling or emotion. He doesn't want to tell us how we should feel; he wants to make us feel.

### D. Questions for a Second Reading.

#### I. The Burial of the Dead

1. How does Eliot make the coming of spring dreadful? Point out specific words.
2. Notice the words "memory" and "desire." What do these have to do with spring? Compare these words with the "forgetful snow" in line 6. How does winter keep us warm?
3. Is there any connection among "memory," "dull roots," and "dried tubers"? Among "memory," "forgetful snow," and "spring rain"?
4. Is the speaker talking about the weather or climate, or do the seasons stand for something? How do you know? What words tell you?
5. In lines 8-19, how does Marie view the seasons? Is your answer the same as to question 4? Is this passage in any way related to "memory" in line 3?
6. Lines 19-30, as you have discovered, allude to Ezekiel. What does the word "roots" in line 19 refer to? to the "dried tubers"? to "dull roots"? to "memory"? To what does "branches" relate? See lines 1-3.
7. What kind of land is the speaker describing? What words and images does he use? How do these images contrast with the red rock? In Isaiah, 32:2, there are these words: "A King shall reign in righteousness. . . and a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Does this passage help you to determine what the red rock and its shadow are doing here?

8. Notice the use of the word "shadow" in lines 25-30. Does it mean the same thing each of the four times it appears? Or does its meaning change? Perhaps this passage from Ecclesiastes 8:13 will help you: "It shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are a shadow, because he feareth not before God."
9. Does this passage from Ecclesiastes help you determine the meaning of "fear" in the next line? This section of the poem is called, "The Burial of the Dead," the title of the Anglican burial service. In this service, as the body is put in the grave, the priest sprinkles ashes and dust on the coffin and says "From ashes to ashes, from dust to dust." Does this information help you explain the words "a handful of dust"?
10. This question has to do with lines 31-42.
  - a. How is this scene connected with spring? with memory? (Note: In the snatch of song in German, a legendary hero in Germany thinks of his lover who is in Ireland.) Does this scene also have reference to desire? (Note: The last line is the report of a messenger whom Tristram, as he lies dying, sends to the sea to see if he can see Isolde's ship returning from Cornwall.)
  - b. Look closely at lines 38-41. The speaker says that she "could not speak," that her "eyes failed," that she was "neither living nor dead," that she "knew nothing." What do these phrases suggest about her experience with her lover? If she is neither "living nor dead," what is she?
  - c. The speaker says that she "knew nothing" because she was "looking into the heart of light, the silence." What might "light" mean here? In what way are "light" and "silence" alike? Eliot might have said "quietness" rather than "silence." Is there any reason why he might have preferred "silence"?
  - d. Compare these lines from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" with the lines you have been examining:

. . . that blessed mood  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world,  
 Is lightened--that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections lead us on  
 Until the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul;  
 . . . /And/ we see into the life of things." (ll.37-48)

- How does the experience Wordsworth describes differ from the one Eliot describes? Wordsworth says that "we see into the life of things." Eliot concludes this passage with the words "Empty and blank is the sea." Are the different endings significant? If not, why not? If so, why?
11. a. Madame Sosostri represents another memory. Do the people who come to her desire anything? If so, what?
  - b. Do you think she is really "the wisest woman in Europe"? Why or why not? How does Eliot let the reader know how he is supposed to react to Madame Sosostri? Point out specific lines.
  - c. Is Madame Sosostri a good spiritual adviser? Does she care about the people who come to her?



## 12. (line 60-68)

- a. What time of year is it in this passage? Is this passage then a description of the present or a memory? Does this help explain why the city is "unreal"?
- b. Are the people real? Look closely at line 63. In what way are they unreal? They are going to London. What may London represent, if dead people are going into it? The Thames River over which they cross? Can you now explain why this scene occurs in the winter? Why is it foggy?
- c. Why does Eliot mention the clock in the church? Why does it make a "dead sound"? Why is it "the final stroke"?

## 13. (lines 69-end of Part I)

- a. To what place does "there" refer?
- b. The speaker says Stetson fought with him at Mylae. The battle of Mylae took place in the third century before Christ, before London was. The poem was written in the 1920's. What does this reference to Mylae indicate about Stetson? Is he dead or alive? If dead, in what sense? If alive, how? Do you now need to revise your answer to question "a"?
- c. Stetson, according to the speaker, has planted a "corpse" in his garden. Are corpses usually "planted"? in gardens? Do they "sprout" or "bloom"? Is the "corpse" in anyway related to the "dull roots" in line 4? To "memory" in line 3? To the "roots" in line 19?
- d. Does the speaker regard Stetson as a friend? Does he seek information from Stetson when he asks questions? If he doesn't, why does he ask the questions?
- e. The speaker gives Stetson some advice. What is it? If the corpse represents "memory" why might he say "keep the Dog hence, that's friend to men"? What is the speaker's attitude toward memory? toward the past? toward spring?

## II. A Game of Chess

## 1. (lines 77-110). In this scene a woman sits at her dressing table putting on makeup and fixing her hair.

- a. Why is her chair compared to "a throne"? What is a Cupidon? With what is he associated? Why is it significant that "another hid his eyes behind his wings? (See line 39). With whom are fruited vines, grapes and wine, associated? How right this mythical god be important in this passage?
- b. Notice that there is a "seven branched candelabra," that her "strange synthetic perfumes. . . ascended" toward the ceiling. Thus we have described a kind of religious rite with candles and incense. Is this scene truly religious? How do you know? Is Eliot satirizing something?
- c. The ceiling of the room is described with almost the same words that Vergil uses to describe Dido's palace in the Aeneid. Who is Dido? What was her relationship to Aeneas? Is the woman described here a kind of Dido? In what way? What, then, might the woman described here represent? (Remember that in the first part we had a series of memories, or an expansion of the first part of the phrase "memory and desire.") Does this woman in any way represent desire? What kind of desire?
- d. How is the legend of Philomel related to this woman? Philomel was changed: is this woman also changed? Are the changes similar? If not, what might be Eliot's point? What is it that the "world still pursues"?



- e. Notice the description of the woman's hair. How do you react to the phrases "fiery points" and "savagely still"? Into what has the woman changed? Is she like Medusa in any way?
2. Lines 111-126
- a. How is this scene related to the one in lines 77-110? Or is it?
- b. Is there anything significant about "rats' alley / where the dead men lost their bones"? What kind of reaction does this produce in the reader? What is "rats' alley"? Why are there dead men there? Why does one speaker ask, "Are you alive or not"? Where are we anyway? (It might be helpful to recall the encounter with Stetson.)
3. Lines 127-138
- a. Why does the word "but" deserve a whole line? Does the emphasis it receives by being the only word in the line help us make a connection between lines 111-126 and lines 127-139? If so, what is that connection? It might be profitable to conceive of lines 111-126 as the first half of a sentence and lines 127-139 as the second half.
- b. The "Shakespearian rag" refers to a song sung by Ariel in The Tempest:

"Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made,  
Those are pearls that were his eyes,  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange  
Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell:  
Ding dong.  
Hark! now I hear them--Ding dong bell."

- Does the woman think of herself as a nymph? If she does, what, according to the song, should she do? Who is dead in her life? What kind of nymph is she? (See line 175--"The nymphs are departed.")
- c. Does this scene have anything to do with "desire"? Is it a good kind of "desire"? To what does it lead?
4. Lines 139-172. This is a tavern scene.
- a. Marriages are said to be made in heaven. How about Lil and Albert's? Where does it appear to have been made?
- b. Does Lil desire to have children? If not, what does she desire? How is she like the woman in lines 127-138?
- c. Notice the repetition of the line "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME." Does it affect the meaning of this passage? Is it related to the clock in line 68?
- d. The last line of this passage comes from a speech by Ophelia in Hamlet just before she commits suicide. When the patrons of the taverns tell each other good evening, where may they be heading? Is the reader left with hope? If not, why not?
- e. Are the ladies "sweet ladies"? If so, why?

### III. The Fire Sermon

[Note? The fire Sermon was preached by Buddha. Buddha admonished his listeners to purge themselves of the fires of the flesh, i.e., carnal desires avarice, pride, and the like. One question you might ask yourself is: Is this section a sermon and if so, what kind of sermon?]

## 1. Lines 173-202

- a. The Thames has been mentioned before by implication in line 62. What did it refer to there? What does it represent here? The same thing?
- b. Where before have we had plants "clutching"? What is the song the speaker refers to?
- c. Have we encountered any nymphs before? What kind of nymphs are they?
- d. What is the "cold blast" that the speaker feels at his back? Perhaps lines from Marvel's poem, "To His Coy Mistress" will help you:

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of eternity.

What then, might the Thames represent? What happened to the nymphs?

- e. The speaker says "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept." The Psalmist says of the Israelites when they were captives in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept." In what sense is the speaker an Israelite in Babylonian captivity?
  - f. Notice the references to bones. Why do these unpleasant images occur here? Do they help relate this passage to other passages? Which ones?
  - g. The reference to Mr. Sweeney and Mrs. Porter recalls the story in which Actaeon follows the sounds of horns and hunting to Diana whom he sees bathing; and after she turns him into a stag, he is killed by his own dogs. Do things look good for Sweeney? How does Mrs. Porter compare with Diana? She's bathing, isn't she?
2. Lines 202-205
- a. In line 205, there is a reference to Tereus, the king that violated Philomel. How does the allusion to Actaeon and Diana, the description of Sweeney coming to Mrs. Porter, relate to these lines?
  - b. What do Sweeney and Tereus and Actaeon have in common? How are their actions related to line 3--"Memory and desire"?
3. Lines 207-214
- a. Mr. Eugenides is called a Smyrna merchant. But there are no longer merchants from Smyrna, a sea port in Turkey. Why then should he occur in a modern poem? Perhaps, the first two lines and recollection of the scene with Stetson will help you explain Eugenides.
  - b. Eugenides is speaking to another man. Is there something unusual about his invitation?
4. Lines 214-256
- a. What sex is Tiresias? How is he like and different from Eugenides? Is there any significance in his blindness? Other characters in the poem have been unable to see. Which ones? Is Tiresias' blindness of the same kind or different? Tiresias says: "Though blind. . . /I/ can see / At the violet hour." If he is blind, how can he "see"? It might be helpful to look up the word "seer" in your dictionary.
  - b. Tiresias is also a prophet. How does he differ from Madame Sosotris who claims to be a prophet?
  - c. The Hyacinth-girl said she was neither "living nor dead." Tiresias is "throbbing between two lives." Is Tiresias only another Hyacinth-girl or is he different?
  - d. Where have we encountered a sailor before? a typist? Why do they reappear here?

- e. Tiresias says that he "perceived the scene, and foretold the rest;" that "I have foresuffered all"; that "I have. . . walked among the lowest of the dead." Why does Eliot have Tiresias narrate this part of the poem? Why is Tiresias an apt figure to talk about "mixing/ memory and desire"? If Tiresias has "walked among the lowest of the dead" and has "foresuffered all," what concept of time must he have? Does he see much difference between the past, the present, and the future? Does your answer in any way help you determine what the "Unreal City" is?
- f. Does Tiresias suggest that the relationship of the typist and her lover is in any way unique or different from other relationships he has seen or foreseen?

5. (Lines 257-305)

Note: The scene now returns to the Thames. The narrator is recalled to the Thames by the sounds along the river bank.

- a. What does the river look like? Eliot here has in mind an opera by Wagner; in that opera, when a golden treasure is stolen, the beauty of the river disappears. What kind of emotional reaction do lines 266-275 produce in the reader? What do they indicate about the narrator's attitude?
- b. Previously when the narrator was on the bank of the Thames, he thought about Sweeney and Mrs. Porter, about Actaeon and Diana. Before that he described a woman as though she were a Cleopatra. Now on the river, he imagines Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth, the very intelligent Queen of England during the time of Shakespeare. Elizabeth was born at Greenwich; therefore when the narrator mentions Greenwich he thinks of her. She was highly thought of; Spenser, for instance, wrote a long poem, the Faerie Queen, which centers partly on Elizabeth. Her age is often looked upon by the English as the greatest age in English history. But Elizabeth here is compared to Cleopatra. She is on a barge with Leicester a lover, whom she never marries. Does the narrator find much to praise when he thinks of Elizabeth and Leicester? Or are they regarded as Cleopatra and Antony, Sweeney and Mrs. Porter, Lil and Albert, the typist and her lover? How like? How different? Does their relationship contrast with the sordid relationships of modern people?

c. (Lines 292-305)

Each of these stanzas represents a song by a different river-nymph. Each of the river nymphs is unchaste and each is like characters that appeared earlier in the poem. How do these nymphs' songs help us know how we are to regard Elizabeth and Leicester? Do these nymphs have anything to do with "memory and desire"?

6. (Lines 306 to 311)

- a. As you have already learned these lines allude to Augustine who was converted from a life of debauchery to a life of chastity and virtue. Augustine once said that Carthage was a "cauldron of unholy loves." Aeneas' lover, Dido, also lived in Carthage. What kind of trial did Aeneas undergo when he was in Carthage? Is there any indication that London is a Carthage?
- b. "Burning" is repeated several times in these lines. If one remembers the line about "mixing memory and desire," and that this section alludes to Buddha's "Fire Sermon," what may "burning" mean here? But "burning" may also mean something else. For instance near the end of the poem, Eliot quotes a line from Dante's Purgatorio, "he hid himself in the fire



that refines them." "Burning" can burn away sin. How then does the last line--the last "burning" differ in meaning from the four "burnings" in line 308?

- c. What then is the point of this "sermon"?

#### IV. Death by Water

- a. Perhaps the place to begin with this section is the line "Gentile or Jew." Eliot may be alluding here to a passage in one of St. Paul's letters: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (I Cor. 12:13). What does baptism do? How is it like the fire of purgation mentioned in line 311?
- b. Refer back to Ariel's song quoted earlier in the study questions. Does this song help explain why this section comes immediately after the nymphs' songs?
- c. What significance does this section have in the light of Madame Sosostri's advice to fear death by water?

#### V. What the Thunder Said

##### 1. (Lines 322-330)

- a. How does Eliot use the references to the despair of the disciples after Christ's death and before his resurrection to picture the narrator's despair? Of what is the narrator despairing?
- b. Notice the word "patience" in l.330. It comes from the Latin "patior" meaning "to suffer." Is Eliot using the word in that sense? Does it make any difference if he is?

##### 2. (Lines 331-358)

- a. Notice the reference to rocks. Go back to "Burial of the Dead" and compare the use of rock here to its use in Section I.
- b. Notice the use of "if." What is the narrator speculating about? What does he want? Notice the line, "But dry sterile thunder without rain."
- c. What words and grammatical devices does Eliot use here to create a feeling of dryness, of thirst, of an infernal heat?
- d. Why is the narrator made to suffer here? Has he somehow been made to discover even more forcefully the dryness and spiritual sterility of London?
- e. Is there any kind of desire here? If there is how does it compare or contrast with the desire depicted in "A Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon"?

##### 3. (Lines 359-365)

This passage alludes to the event on the road to Emmaus. How does this passage, then, relate to the passage with which this section of the poem begins? Is the narrator's situation hopeless? He earlier said "He who was living is now dead." Might this scene change his attitude? Or does he, like Madame Sosostri who fails to find the Hanged Man, fail to discern the resurrected Christ? Is he still despairing?

##### 4. (Lines 366-377)

- a. Who are the hooded hordes? When have hordes destroyed a civilization? Are they the crowds of people Madame Sosostri sees?
- b. How is "reforms" used in this passage? Does this city reform?



- c. In lines 375-377, the narrator mentions several cities, each a birth-place of some heritage in western civilization. How does he regard them? Are they all dead, all in hell, the underworld?
5. (Lines 377-385)
- Where have we encountered "violet light" before? Is this a good or bad kind of light?
  - What do the "towers" stand for? Where have we encountered bells and clocks? Where have we been reminded of time? What is happening to western civilization here? Might the reference to towers be an allusion to the tower of Babel? (See Genesis 11) If so, what does it mean?
6. Lines 377-384
- What is "whisper music"? Where have we encountered "violet light" before? Are you prepared to explain what "violet light" represents in this poem?
  - Why the reference to bats? Where do bats usually live? Where has the speaker's journey taken him? Why the reference to towers? What is unusual about them? Why the reference to bells? Have there been other bells in this poem?
  - Notice the rhyme in this passage. What purpose do you think it serves? Has there been any rhyme in the poem before now?
7. (Line 385-394)
- Contrast this passage with the preceding one. How do they differ?
  - Whose graves does the narrator see? Have there been previous references to dry bones? Where? Try to determine what "bones" represent in this poem.
  - The cock often stands for the clergyman in medieval literature; the clergyman, like the cock, is to awaken people, not from physical, but from spiritual sleep. Does this help explain why there is a cock in this passage?
  - How has the weather changed? What has happened to the "dry and sterile thunder"?
  - Where might the speaker be now? Is he still in the underworld, in hell? How do you know?
8. Lines 395-422
- "Ganga" is a variant spelling of "Ganges." What is the Ganges? What part does it play in Indian religion? Why doesn't the narrator come upon the Thames? upon the Euphrates? the Nile? the Mississippi? Lines 374-76 might be helpful here. (Note: "Himavant" is a mountain peak in the Himalayas.)
  - Who is "my friend"? How can blood shake the heart? What is the awful daring of a moment's surrender? Why can it never be retracted? By what have "we existed"?
  - What kind of prison do we have here? /There is a reference here to Ugolino, a character in Dante's Inferno, who remembers the turning of the key that locked him and his children in a tower to starve to death after he had treacherously betrayed his city./ What then is the significance of the "key" in this passage? To what is the phrase "Only at nightfall" grammatically linked?
  - What is the significance of the subjunctive mood in "would have responded" in this passage? Whose heart is the speaker referring to? How is this passage connected to "Death by Water"? Or is it?
  - Does the speaker think that modern man can "give," "sympathize" and

"control"? Does he find two of the commands more impossible than the other?

- f. Are these commands in any way related to "mixing/ memory and desire"? What kind of desire do we have here? Are there any memories? Or has the speaker forgotten all about the past? If there are memories, what are they? Do they differ from other memories in this poem?
9. (Lines 423-end of poem)
  - a. Has the speaker ever fished before? How has the speaker's position in regard to the "waste land," the "deserts," the "arid plain," changed? Is this significant in any way? (Review the lines from "His Coy Mistress.")
  - b. Do you suppose that the act of fishing was chosen by Eliot for any reason? Couldn't the speaker just as well be hunting? If there is a specific reason, what may the speaker just as well be hunting? If there is a specific reason, what may the speaker be fishing for?
  - c. Notice the reference to the nursery rhyme about London Bridge. Where has London Bridge appeared before? Isn't it rather silly to use a line from a nursery rhyme in a poem like this? Does this line indicate that the speaker is returning to childhood? One of the later lines in this nursery rhyme is "Take the key and lock her up, my fair lady." Does that line relate to anything else in the poem? If so, what? How? Where else have we had architectural structures "falling down"? Is London Bridge really falling? If not what does the reference to "falling down" signify?
  - d. What are the fragments the speaker refers to? What are his "ruins"? What does this line mean then? Is this line only a justification for this poem? If not, what might the speaker be defending?
  - e. The line "Why then Ile fit you" was spoken by Hieronymo in a play just before he kills the men who have murdered his sons; Hieronymo finds this action necessary because of the apparent lack of justice in an evil world. Who is the "you" so far as the narrator is concerned? Why does he imply he will kill someone? Who has wronged him? Does this line imply that the speaker finds no justice in the world?
  - f. Why should the speaker refer to madness? If he is mad, does that mean the world is sane? Or is his madness something different than insanity? How do you know? Why does he use the word "again"? Has he been "mad" before?

#### E. Discussion Questions

1. An epic poem usually tells the story of a cultural or national hero, who goes on a journey during which he is tried and tested so that he may develop his virtue. The virtue that he acquires because of these trials and tests enables him to establish a new society, e.g. Aeneas, or to reform a degenerate one, e.g. Odysseus. Often times in an epic, the hero also has to go to hell or the underworld in order to find out his future. Does The Waste Land in anyway conform to the characteristics of the epic poems? How does it differ? When in the underworld, the epic hero usually encounters people he has known or heard about. Does this occur in this poem? Where? What does our hero learn from them?
2. Focus your discussion upon the characters that the speaker encounters. How do these characters differ from the characters in novels you have read? Are

we interested in the characters for themselves? If not, why does Eliot introduce them? The characters in a spiritual journey, such as Pilgrim's Progress, are often created in order to stand for spiritual and moral qualities; for instance, in Pilgrim's Progress these are characters such as Talkative, Hypocrisy, Hope. Does Eliot use his characters in this way? If so, what does each character represent?

3. One of the most interesting sections in this poem is entitled "A Game of Chess." Chess games often appear in literature. Sometimes the game of chess is used to portray the way man is subjected to Fate. Why is the game of chess an apt way to represent such an idea? What happens when you make a wrong opening move in a chess game when you are playing with a very skilled chess player? Is there any indication that the characters in "A Chess Game" have made the wrong "opening moves"? To what destiny have they subjected themselves? What motivates their actions? Is there any chance that they may escape the logic of the chess game they have started to play?
4. One of the things that makes Eliot's poem so hard to read is his allusions to works with which most modern readers are unacquainted. It takes a lot of hard work to find the source to which he is alluding and to figure out the relationship between the allusion and the poem. So, we have to ask ourselves whether this poem is worth all the hard work, or, after we have discovered all the allusions, is there anything left to the poem? Is this poem only as rewarding as a jigsaw puzzle? The study questions provide you with most of the allusions. Attempt to determine if these allusions in any way make the poem a better poem. For instance, in the case of Stetson, Eliot could have alluded to a battle fought during World War I rather than to Mylae; such a reference would be more easily picked up by the average reader. Can you defend Eliot's choice? Most of us know very little about Buddha; why doesn't Eliot use Christ's Sermon on the Mount rather than The Fire Sermon? Most of us know very little about the "tarot" deck of cards; why doesn't Eliot use a bridge deck instead? Most of us know very little about Phoenecian traders, but we know that the English are renowned for their commercial or trading enterprises. Why then doesn't Eliot use English instead of Phoenician traders?
5. Study the following passages from Ecclesiastics 12:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after rain: in the days when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders/workmen/ cease because they are few, and those that look out of windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he /The Judge, God/ shall rise up at the voice of and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goes to his long home, and the mourners about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken,



or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

Pay particular attention to the underlined passages.

- a. Is The Waste Land a description of a judgment day? Who is doing the judging? What is being judged?
- b. Does the judge have pleasure in the things of the world? Support your answer from the text.
- c. Is the earth darkened in The Waste Land?
- d. What is the "voice of the bird" in The Waste Land (line 99)? Does this voice shatter the allusion of that vanity or beauty? How?
- e. Who are the daughters of music? Are they brought low?
- f. Does desire fail in The Waste Land? Is there fear in The Waste Land?
- g. Do the cisterns give water in The Waste Land?
- h. Does this passage aid you in formulating the theme of The Waste Land?
6. In The Waste Land, there are several references and allusions to "dry bones," to "death by water," to suicide. Is death always treated in the same way? Is there more than one kind of death? What kinds are there? Which kind of death is to be preferred? Why? Does the narrator always regard death as the end of things? If he doesn't, what may one kind of death lead to?
7. Sometimes when we read a poem like The Waste Land, we are so concerned with the "meaning" that we are tempted to ignore other aspects of the poem. If we remember that The Wasteland depicts a spiritual journey, perhaps we can discover some aspects that we often ignore. You may remember that in the picaresque or journey novel, e.g. Lazarillo, The Sword in the Stone, the journey undertaken by the hero in such a novel allows the author to expose the follies and moral faults and failings of a particular society; he usually depicts these faults by having members of that society mistreat the hero. Is this principle at work in The Wasteland? What kind of society does Eliot's narrator encounter? Is he an outcast in this society in much the same way that the picaresque hero is an outcast? If you decide that he is an outcast, does his position outside of society allow Eliot to do anything? Is the speaker in any way mistreated by his society? (Recall the line "Why then lie fit you.") What is the narrator's basic attitude toward London society? Towards western civilization? Point out specific passages that support your answer. What is wrong with western civilization? Does the narrator suggest any way in which its faults might be corrected?
8. Do you regard this poem as pessimistic or optimistic? Do you think Eliot has much hope for western man? Point to specific lines and passages to support your contention. You might begin with the section "Death by Water." Is there any hope of resurrection in this section? Or do all things end with death by water? From here you might go to the corpse Stetson has buried and Madame Sosostris' failure to find the "Hanged Man" and to the opening lines of "What the Thunder Said."



## V. A Study of Satiric Techniques

### A. Satire in Pabbitt

Satire, as you learned in your study of satire in the ninth grade, usually takes one of three forms: direct attack, animal fable or human fable. Lewis, as do Eliot and Fitzgerald, prefers to use the human fable. The following selections and the questions should help you in explaining why Lewis chose the human fable and more importantly, how he uses it for satirical purposes.

This passage was written by H.L. Mencken, a twentieth-century critic of American civilization. (p. 1031, Yale Review, June, 1920):

But this bugaboo aristocracy is actually bogus, and the evidence of its bogusness lies in the fact that it is insecure. One gets into it only onerously, but out of it very easily. Entrance is effected by dint of a long and bitter struggle, and the chief accidents of that struggle are almost intolerable humiliations. The aspirant must school and steel himself to sniffs and sneers; he must see the door slammed upon him a hundred times before ever it is thrown open to him. To get in at all he must show a talent for abasement--and abasement makes him timorous. Worse, that timorousness is not cured when he succeeds at last. On the contrary, it is made even more tremulous, for what he faces within the gates is a scheme of things made up almost wholly of harsh and often unintelligible taboos and the penalty for violating even the least of them is swift and disastrous. He must exhibit exactly the right social habits, appetites and prejudices, public and private. He must harbor exactly the right enthusiasms and indignations. He must have a hearty taste for exactly the right sports and games. His attitude toward the fine arts must be properly tolerant and yet not a shade too eager. He must read and like exactly the right books, pamphlets and travels. His wife must patronize the right milliners. He himself must stick to the right haberdashery. He must live in the right neighborhood. He must even embrace the right doctrines of religion. It would ruin him, for all society column purposes, to move to Union Hill, N.J., or to drink coffee from his saucer, or to marry a chambermaid with a gold tooth or to join the Seventh Day Adventists. Within the boundaries of his curious order he is worse fettered than a monk in a cell. Its obscure conception of propriety, its nebulous notion that this or that is honorable, hampers him in every direction, and very narrowly. What he resigns when he enters, even when he makes his first deprecating knock at the door, is every right to attack the ideas that happen to prevail within. Such as they are, he must accept them without question. And as they shift and change he must shift and change with them, silently and quickly.

- a. Describe the technique that Mencken uses to satirize the American "aristocracy." First, what is Mencken attacking? Be precise in your answer. Second, how does Mencken use irony? You might begin with the sentence which begins, "To get in at all he must show...."
- b. Try to determine if Mencken and Lewis are satirizing much the same thing. If you decide they are, discuss what limitations Lewis would have placed upon himself if he had used the kind of technique that Mencken does.

- Would his satire have been as effective? Why or why not? Would there perhaps have been some advantages if Lewis had adopted Mencken's technique?
- c. In support of your position in your answer of Question 2, you might wish to write a sketch in which you satirize something Lewis does by using Mencken's technique. For instance, you might wish to satirize conventions, lawn parties, or barbecues.
2. Swift, an eighteenth-century satirist, like Lewis, found much to satirize in his society. In The Fourth Book of Gulliver's Travels Swift employs the animal fable as a satiric technique. In order to do so, he creates a creature called a Yahoo. The Yahoo is an ape-like creature with features surprisingly similar to man. You will find below several passages from Gulliver's Travels in which Swift, through the Yahoos, satirizes men. In each case, the Master Houyhnhnm, Gulliver's host, tells Gulliver something about the Yahoo.
- a. For if (said he) you throw among five yahoos as much food as would be sufficient for fifty, they will, instead of eating peaceably, fall together by the ears, each single one impatient to have all to itself, and therefore a servant was usually employed to stand by while they were feeding abroad, and those kept at home were tied at a distance from each other...
  - b. That in some fields of his country there are certain shining stones of several colours, whereof the yahoos are violently fond, and when part of these stones are fixed in the earth, as it sometimes happeneth they will dig with their claws for whole days to get them out, carry them away, and hide them by heaps in their kennels; but still looking round with great caution, for fear their comrades should find out their treasure. My master said, he could never discover the reason of this unnatural appetite, or how these stones could be of any use to a yahoo; but now he believed it might proceed from the same principle of avarice which I had ascribed to mankind; that he had once, by way of experiment privately removed a heap of these stones from the place where one of his yahoos had buried it: whereup the sordid animal, missing his treasure, by his loud lamenting brought the whole herd to the place, there miserably howled, then fell to biting and tearing the rest, began to pine away, would neither eat, nor sleep, nor work, till he ordered a servant privately to convey the stones into the same hole and hide them as before; which when his yahoo had found, he presently recovered his spirits and good humour, but took care to remove them to a better hiding-place, and hath ever since been a very serviceable brute.
  - c. There was also another kind of root very juicy, but somewhat rare and difficult to be found, which the yahoos sought for with much eagerness, and would suck it with great delight; and it produced in them the same effects that wine hath upon us. It would make them sometimes hug, and sometimes tear one another; they would howl and grin, and chatter, and reel, and tumble, and then fall asleep in the mud.
  - d. My master likewise mentioned another quality which his servants had discovered in several yahoos, and to him was wholly unaccountable. He said, a fancy would sometimes take a yahoo to retire into a corner, to

lie down and howl, and groan, and spurn away all that come near him, although he were young and fat, and wanted neither food nor water; nor did the servants imagine what could possibly ail him. And the only remedy they found was to set him to hard work, after which he would infallibly come to himself.

1. What is Swift satirizing in each of these passages? Are the parallels between the Yahoo's habits and patterns of actions and those of men made sufficiently clear? What does Swift gain by exposing the faults and failings of man through his animal fable? Could he not have written an essay in which he directly attacked these vices? Would it have been as effective? Why or why not?
2. Do Lewis and Swift attack similar faults and vices in men? Give particular instances from Babbitt.
3. Could not Lewis have written an animal fable? What problems would he have encountered? Could he then have made his reader sympathetic toward his hero? Why or why not? Would Lewis' reader be likely to accept or reject an animal fable satire? Why or why not?
4. One of the problems that the satirist faces is giving his reader a kind of distance, for after all he is satirizing them. They must not be aware immediately that they are being satirized, for, if they were, they probably would not read the satire. Which gives the satirist the most distance, the animal fable or the human fable? Why?
5. One of the devices that a satirist often employs is that of exaggeration through which he creates characters that are not "real" but grotesque--characters that are flat rather than round, characters that exhibit a limited number of traits by which they can be identified. Does Swift create grotesques? Is Lewis' Babbitt in any way a grotesque? Or does Babbitt appear to be "real"? What about Lewis' other characters? Are they also grotesques?
6. How does Lewis use the human fable as a satiric technique? Would his satire have been more forceful if he had used formal attack or an animal fable?

#### Satire in The Great Gatsby:

1. Petronius Arbiter, a first century Roman government official, is said to be the author of a work entitled the Satyricon. Petronius was both a consul and a governor and was admitted into the circle of Nero's intimates. Petronius evidently became disgusted with the goings-on of his time and the moral character of Roman officials, for in the Satyricon, he satirizes contemporary Roman society.

Petronius creates two heroes, Encolpius and Ascyltus, who, together with their servant, Giton, travel through Southern Italy where they encounter various men and women who represent and portray the vice-ridden Roman society. During their journeys they are invited to eat dinner with a man named Trim-alchio.

At this dinner, they are served several fantastic dishes--egg-shaped pastries with roasted birds inside, a course served on a circular tray on which are placed foods appropriate to each of the signs of the zodiac, a cooked hare provided with wings so that it looks like Pegasus. The serving dishes are not only expensive and luxurious, but marvellous and unique.



For instance, on the corners of a tray there are four gravy boats, each shaped like a satyr. And, while they eat, there is always music being played. The house in which this event takes place is so large that at one point the narrator compares it to a labyrinth. Among the decorations and trappings in the house are a gold bird cage which houses a magpie, frescoes depicting the career of Trimalchio, a huge wardrobe "with a small built-in shrine," a golden casket which contains the clippings from Trimalchio's first beard.

The conversation that takes place during the meal ranges from topic to topic. Some of it centers on Trimalchio. One man argues that it is unhealthy to take a daily bath; and then describes a funeral which he thought nice because of the fine drapes, nice bier and the number of mourners. Another tells how a man made his fortune; another comments on the high price of bread, finds fault with governmental officials, and attributes the general bad economical situation to people's disbelief in the gods. Another talks about an upcoming gladiator contest which he looks forward to because the promoter has spent a lot of money obtaining the best fighters and because there will be much bloodshed. A father describes his son; he is glad his son is studying law because "there's money in it," more than in studying literature.

Trimalchio himself has had a remarkable career. He started life as a servant, but rose to his present position by "his ability"--or so he claims. He had made himself his master's pet and upon his master's death, inherited a "senator's fortune." Since then he had accumulated more and more wealth. He is so wealthy that, for instance, he doesn't remember how many lands and estates he owns; one thing he wants to buy is Sicily. He is proud of his fortune and of his "ability." He constantly and proudly reminds his wife, Fortuna, that he had married her when she was disreputable and has made her reputable. He ostentatiously frees slaves and attempts to portray himself as a magnanimous man by not allowing his orders to be carried out when he has commanded a slave to be beaten for some trifling error.

Trimalchio is particularly proud of his house and his clothes. He says of his house: "It used to be a shack; now it's a shrine." His house is so large that it contains four dining rooms, twenty bedrooms, two porticoes, an upstairs dining room, a master bedroom, and enough guestrooms for all his guests. His clothes are the most expensive and ornate ones money can buy. When he displays the clothes in which he is to be buried, he says that they are so splendid that everyone will come and pray for him.

Trimalchio narrates the events of his career, boasts of his possessions, exhibits his phony generosity to anyone who will pay attention. Indeed, his attitude toward himself and others is captured in his statement that "money makes the man: No money and you're nobody. But big money, big man." His household gods--Fat Profit, Good Luck, and Large Income--reveal his values.

One rather interesting thing about Trimalchio is his attraction to the color green: he plays with a green ball; his wife wears a pale green sash; the porter is dressed in green; the narrator notes that green must be the "livery of the house."

The party ends in a drunken, revolting riot caused by Trimalchio's reading his will and asking his guests to pretend they are at his funeral feast.

## 2. Questions

- a. In the Great Gatsby, Nick, at the beginning of Chapter VII says about Gatsby: "His career as Trimalchio was over." In what ways is Gatsby like Trimalchio? How is he different? How are Gatsby's parties like Trimalchio's? How are the guests alike, especially their conversation?
- b. How does Petronius seem to look at his society? How does Fitzgerald? Do they see similar faults in different societies? What ones?
- c. Compare Trimalchio's and Gatsby's houses. Are they similar? In what ways? How does the owner of each regard his house? Do they represent anything for each character? What?
- d. Compare Trimalchio's and Gatsby's attitudes toward clothes and personal ornaments. What do they represent for both characters?
- e. Compare the career of Gatsby and of Trimalchio. Are they in any way alike? How? Compare the values which allowed them to succeed.
- f. Is Gatsby's funeral anything like the pretended funeral of Trimalchio? Why or why not?
- g. Notice that green plays an important part in both Fitzgerald's and Petronius' stories. Might Fitzgerald have derived the color green from Petronius? What might green represent in Fitzgerald's story?
- h. Use the comparisons you have made to determine how both Petronius and Fitzgerald go about satirizing their societies.

## C. Satire in The Waste Land:

1. Eliot, in the Waste Land, satirizes modern men and society. For his technique, he is indebted to many earlier writers, one of whom is Menippus. Menippus, about whom we know little, was a slave-born Roman, who was critical of his age. He became known as a philosopher; he believed and taught that the sole basis of happiness is virtue and that virtue and happiness can only be attained when one frees himself of all wants and desires but the desire for virtue. Menippus, in trying to persuade other men to his beliefs, wrote satires. In one of these satires, he takes a journey to the underworld where he meets the former great men of the world; there he discovers that death has humbled their former greatness. The point is that these men do not have happiness in the underworld because they sought to fulfill their wants and desires and did not seek virtue; they sought the wrong kind of happiness.

A later Roman writer, Lucian, does much the same kind of thing. He writes a series of dialogues, one of which is called the Dialogues of the Dead. In this work, Lucian portrays such characters as Alexander, Achilles, Menippus, Diogenes. From the point of view of the underworld, Lucian is able to show up the vanities and pretences of living men.

An eighteenth-century writer, Jonathan Swift, uses a similar device. Gulliver, an adventurous sea-captain, visits the land of Laputa and then the land of the Glubdubdribbs. Glubbubdrib, according to Gulliver, means the "Island of Sorcerers" or Magicians. The governor of this island has the power of calling anyone he pleases from the dead and has complete control

over them for twenty-four hours. The governor calls up for Gulliver those dead people whom Gulliver wishes to see or to whom he wishes to talk. Gulliver then has called up Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Pompey and many other great men of the past. But he also desires to see some modern men. At one point he says:

I was chiefly disgusted with modern history. For having strictly examined all the persons of greatest name in the courts and princes for an hundred years past, I found how the world had been misled by prostitute writers, to ascribe the greatest virtue to betrayers of their country, piety to atheists, chastity to sodomites, truth to informers. How many innocent and excellent persons had been condemned to death or banishment, by the practising of great ministers upon the corruption of judges and the malice of factions. How many villains had been exalted to the highest places of trust, power, dignity, and profit.... How low an opinion I had of human wisdom and integrity, when I was truly informed of the springs and motives of great enterprises and revolutions in the world, and of the contemptible accidents to which they owed their success.

## 2. Questions

- 1-a. Does Eliot use the satirical technique described and illustrated above? Supply proof for your answer by pointing to lines and passages in the poem. Are there dead men in his poem? Are there living men? Is there any contrast made between the living and dead men, if there are both? What is that contrast?
- b. (1) Examine the paragraph quoted from Gulliver's Travels. What is Swift satirizing here? What technique does he use? Why does he use it? Why doesn't he just satirize living men?  
(2) Does Eliot satirize the same thing as Swift? How are the objects of their satire alike or different? How does Swift's technique differ from that of Eliot? Or does it?
- c. Does Eliot seem to agree with Menippus' view that virtue is the only basis for happiness and that happiness can only be achieved when wants and desires are left unfulfilled? Is there any relation between this view and the technique Menippus uses? Between Eliot's view of life and the technique that he uses? What are those relationships if there are any?

## 2-Tiresias:

- a. Tiresias appears many places in literature. For instance, he appears in one of Lucian's dialogues. In it, Menippus talks to Tiresias and gets Tiresias to tell his life's story. When Menippus leaves Tiresias, he suggests that Tiresias is not a very good prophet; he is like all prophets and tells only lies.
- b. In more recent literature, Tiresias appears in two poems, one by Tennyson and the one by Swinburne. In the poem by Tennyson, Tiresias tells how he was blinded and how he became a prophet:

There in a secret olive-glade I saw  
Pallas Athene climbing from the bath  
In anger; yet one glittering foot disturb'd  
The lucid well; one snowy knee was prest



Against the margin flowers; a dreadful light  
 Came from her golden hair, her golden helm  
 And all her golden armour on the grass,  
 And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes  
 Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark  
 For ever, and I heard a voice that said  
 'Henceforth be blind, for thou has seen too much,  
 And speak the truth that no man may believe.'

Later, Tiresias says:

And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd  
 The power of prophesying--but to me  
 No power--so chain'd and coupled with the curse  
 Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard  
 And heard not, when I spake of famine, plague,  
 Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunderbolt,  
 And angers of the Gods for evil done  
 And expiation lack'd--no power on Fate,  
 Theirs, or mine own!

c. In the Swinburne poem, Tiresias also speaks:

I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,  
 Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led  
 From night to night and dead men unto dead,  
 And from the blind hope to the memory blind;  
 For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,  
 Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.

### Questions

1. Compare Lucian's treatment of Tiresias with that of Tennyson. Do they view Tiresias in the same manner? Do both consider him a good prophet? Is there any indication of how Eliot considers Tiresias as a prophet? Does he seem to agree with Lucian or Tennyson? Or neither? Consider Madame Sosostriis, a prophetess. Is she like either Lucian's or Tennyson's prophet?
2. Notice how Tennyson accounts for Tiresias's blindness. Are there any other legends or myths referred to in Eliot's poem in which changes such as Tiresias' occurs? Are any of the mythical characters who are changed also prophets in some way? Why might Eliot use such mythical characters in this poem?
3. Notice how Tennyson's Tiresias feels about his gift of prophecy. Does Eliot's Tiresias feel the same way? Or is there no indication how he feels about his prophecy? If Eliot's Tiresias should feel the same way as Tennyson's, what is Eliot suggesting about modern men? Does his use of Tiresias as a narrator in part of the poem make his poem optimistic or pessimistic?
4. a. Study the lines by Swinburne. Do you see any similarities between these lines and Eliot's poem? Be specific.  
 b. What does Swinburne's Tiresias mean when he says: "I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind"? Are there any references to time in Eliot's poem? Is Eliot's Tiresias in any way related to those references to

- time? In the same way that Swinburne's Tiresias is related to time?
5. Does Eliot's technique of portraying men as though they were in the underworld in anyway relate to his use of Tiresias as a narrator?

## VI. DESIRE AS A THEME

In each of the works that you have read in this unit, desire is an important theme. Having said that, it is now necessary to examine and isolate the various kinds of desire that we find in these three works. Perhaps the following passages will help you distinguish these various kinds of desire.

A. "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her 'What wilt thou?' She said unto him, 'Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy Kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said 'Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'" (Matthew 20:20).

1. How would you characterize Zebedee's wife? What kind of desire does she exhibit?
2. Compare Zebedee's wife and Sinclair Lewis' Mike Monday. How are they alike? How different?
3. Zebedee's wife desires power for her sons. Is there any character in the works you have read in this unit who desire political power? spiritual power? Are there any who misuse that power?

B. "He whose heart hath many desires, though he be rich must be called poor; he whose heart's only desire is contentment, though he be poor must be called rich." (From Dov-Ahi-Keu by a Buddhist Priest of the 9th century).

1. Notice the contradictory nature of this Buddhist aphorism. Have you encountered in this unit anyone "whose heart hath many desires" and who is rich but yet is poor? How are the words "rich" and "poor" used in this statement? How can you be rich and poor at the same time? Are there any characters that desire only contentment? Who? What might contentment mean? Something like "ease"?
2. Does this statement summarize the "content" of this unit? What might it leave out?

C. "Now, my son, see to what a mock are brought  
The goods of fortune's keeping, and how soon!  
Though to possess them still is all man's thought  
Even as our eye did not uplift itself  
Aloft being fastened upon earthly things  
So justice here has merged it in the earth. Purgatory, xix, 120ff.

These lines are spoken by Vergil, Dante's guide. Just before he makes these comments, the two travellers have seen a great many men rolling huge weights about and cursing and fighting each other; this is their punishment for being avaricious. They see many whom Dante has known--priests as well as secular misers and spendthrifts.

1. What is Vergil's attitude toward the accumulation of wealth? How is the punishment appropriate to the sin of avarice?
2. Can you think of any characters studied in this unit who exhibit a "never ending" desire for temporal goods? Is there any indication that these characters might be or are punished in a way similar to the men in the Inferno?

D. "Mammon led them on,  
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell  
From Heaven; for even in Heaven his looks and thoughts  
Were always downward bent, admiring more  
The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold,  
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed  
In vision beatific." Paradise Lost, i, 678ff.

1. Who is Mammon? What does he usually represent? Mammon, one of the angels that fell with Satan, is described here as he acted before the fall.
2. What is peculiar about Mammon's attitudes and actions, particularly since he is an angel? What is Milton's attitude toward Mammon? Does he approve or disapprove of him?
3. Are there any Mammons in the works you have read in this unit? Is there anyone who, in the midst of the possibility of being more, keeps his eyes on gold? Who? What is the author's attitude toward them? Do they eventually fall or change? Why?
4. What is a "vision beatific"? Do any occur in the works you have read? What are they like? If there are none, why might there be none?

E. "When we are well we wonder what we would do if ill, but when ill, we gladly take medicine because the illness persuades us to do so. We no longer have the passions and desires for amusement that health gave us, but which are incompatible with the necessities of illness. So Nature gives us passions and desires suitable to our state. We are only troubled by the fears which we and not Nature give ourselves, for they add to the state in which we are the passions of the state in which we are not.

As Nature makes us unhappy in every state, our desires picture to us a happy state; because they add to the state in which we are the pleasures of the state in which we are not. And if we attained to these pleasures, we should not be happy after all; because we should have other desires Natural to this new state." Pascal, Pensees, 109

1. What does Pascal mean when he refers to "passions and desires suitable to our state"? How might he distinguish "suitable" and "unsuitable" desires?
2. How does Pascal think desires can be satiated? Or can they be? If they can, why? If not, why not?
3. Does this passage from Pascal help you in accounting for the action of Gatsby? of Babbitt? of characters in the Waste Land? Do the authors of these works differ or agree with Pascal in their conception of desires and passions?

F. Buddha's "Fire Sermon":

And the Blessed One, after having dwelt at Uruvela as long as he thought fit, went forth to Gayasisa, accompanied by a great number of Bhikkhus, by one thousand Bhikkhus who all had been Gatilas before. There near Gaya, at



Gayasias, the Blessed One dwelt together with those thousand Bhikkhus.

There, the Blessed One thus addressed the Bhikkhus: 'Everything, O Bhikkhus, is burning. And how, O Bhikkhus, is everything burning?

'The eye, O Bhikkhus, is burning; visible things are burning; the mental impressions based on the eye are burning; the contact of the eye with visible things is burning; the sensation produced by the contact of the eye with visible things, be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither pleasant nor painful, that also is burning with the anxieties of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair.

'The ear is burning, sounds are burning; nose is burning, odours are burning; the tongue is burning, tastes are burning; the body is burning, objects of contact are burning; the mind is burning, thoughts are burning.

'Considering this, O Bhikkhus, a disciple learned in the scriptures, walking in the Noble Path, becomes weary of the eye, weary of visible things, weary of the contact of the eye with visible things, weary also of the sensation produced by the contact of the eye with visible things, be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither pleasant nor painful. He becomes weary of the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind. Becoming weary of all that, he divests himself of passion; by absence of passion he is made free; when he is free, he becomes aware that he is free; and he realizes that rebirth is finished; that holiness is completed; that duty is fulfilled; and that there is no further return to this world.'

When this exposition was propounded, the minds of those thousands Bhikkhus became free from attachment to the world, and were released from the Asavas.

Adapted From Sacred Books of the East.

1. What do you think "Asavas" in the last sentence means?
2. Does this speech by Buddha help explain the section of Eliot's poem, "The Fire Sermon"?
3. What does Buddha mean by "passion"? What does it include?
4. How does he regard passion? Is it good or bad? If it is bad what is one supposed to do about it?
5. Does the thought of this sermon apply to other works in this unit?

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Student Packet

MAN AND NATURE:

THE SEARCH FOR FORM

Cather  
Frost

Grade 11

Copyright, The University of Nebraska, 1965  
Experimental Materials  
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center

CORE TEXTS:

Cather, Willa, My Antonia, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co. 1918) \$1.80

Frost, Robert, A Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems, with an Introduction and Commentary by Louis Untermeyer, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960) W556 - 60¢



I. This unit includes no reading questions; the novels and poems of the unit are superficially easy reading. The notes that follow are for your second go round--your 'meditating' on Frost and Cather.

- 1.1. Let us imagine that no one had ever worked with your writing, that you have not previously read any writings by anyone else and that you have never been influenced by the form of anyone else's storytelling or movies or TV shows.

How would you tell a story?

Could you tell a cowboy story?

Could you write a satire, an epic?

Could you write something which had a "form"? How would you know that it had a form?

- 1.2. Imagine trying to make the first chair--before anyone had made a chair. Now imagine trying to make a beautiful chair and the first one. Could you? What would it be like?
- 1.3. Did you ever see a face in a cloud? in a hickory stick? Try to carve the hickory stick to make the face 'come out' into the air? Michelangelo saw slaves in the stone and carved them half way out.
- 1.4. A man can go walking in the woods and find a perfect cane--an old piece of dead wood which has lost its bark and been polished by rain and wind. Before that it was twisted just right by the winds. It is helpful on certain hills to have a cane even if one doesn't limp.
- 1.5. How does one find the right shape for a cane--beautiful, comely, one that supports one in walking?
- 1.6. A silver cup makes water taste better than ambrosia.
- 1.7. How would one ever find the right shape for a house, for a pot, a chair, a cup, a frying pan--a poem?
- 1.8. Very few people know how to grow a garden right, how to make plants fit the ground, and the trees the plants, and the houses and fences the trees and the plants. Thoreau's artist of Kouroo knew how to make a garden. So did Thoreau's "strange and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple tree wood which stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years."
- 1.9. How does one find the right form for something if someone has not first been shown one of the somethings or if one is working on something new?

## II: My Antonia:

Since this unit is an exploration of novels and poems written by two American writers who care about region, about natural things, and about the individual's capacity to create his own form for things, the pensees of this unit are an effort by one writer to perceive what our authors are saying about how poems, buildings, societies ought to be shaped, about how life ought to be shaped as one lives in contact with these hills, these trees and so forth. These pensees may be wrong--deliberately wrong; they may be right. They are efforts to see the shape of novels and of poems and to see what they say about the shape which we ought to find--or seek for--in an experience. If you don't like what the writer says, say, "Stupid"--"Wrong"--"Stretching it"--"Over-allegorical"--"He has his facts wrong here". But you then must make your own pensee refuting what the notemaker has said.

The thoughts set down here often do not repeat or reinforce the hypotheses about Cather and Frost which appear in the teacher packet; they are independent. Your teacher does not have in his possession the 'right thoughts'. He will have to work out what he accepts or rejects in the pages which follow--just as you will.

### Introduction:

- 2.1. They have shared an iron time. He is a romantic and a legalist and lives with a wife without imagination or zeal. Antonia is the country; she stands for it. The narrator has become an eastern big shot: can he see Antonia? Whose mind sees the truth?
- 2.2. The book My Antonia has no form--this thing of Jim Burden's is just written. But Cather wrote it deliberately--the formless thing has a subtler form.

### Book I: And now Jim Burden's remarks.

- 3.1. Jesse James: The Life of Jesse James is an American myth--a western myth: the bad guy who steals from the rich railroads and banks to give to the poor guys. The real Jesse James was a killer. Jim Burden who in fantasy admires outsiders sees Antonia, outsider, through the silly eyes of somebody infatuated with Robin Hood.
- 3.2. The conductor (p. 4) is a man of no name and no place, carrying the symbols of every name and every place; he belongs to fraternal orders and has hieroglyphics about him. Jim Burden also is part of the railroad organization? Would the immigrant family from across the water in the next car belong to a fraternal order? and is that Willa Cather's point?
- 3.3. (p. 5) Teasing about girls--ten years old.
- 3.4. (p. 5) Jake does have something to do with the Bible's Jacob!

Jim Burden's mind is a mind that sees the West through the glasses of the myth of the Western world.

- 3.5. Otto Fuchs might have stepped out of the pages of Jesse James. The description on page 6 is a perception of Otto Fuchs' face, through the glasses provided by western story; he turns into the tough hombre of Western story--"a sinister curl".
- 3.6. Jim Burden speaks of foreign families and American families; that's going to be one of the major concerns of the novel.
- 3.7. (pp. 7,8) "There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made. No, there was nothing but land--slightly undulating, I knew, because often our wheels ground against the brake as we went down into a hollow and lurched up again on the other side. I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction. I had never before looked up at the sky when there was not a familiar mountain ridge against it. But this was the complete dome of heaven, all there was of it. I did not believe that my dead father and mother were watching me from up there; they would still be looking for me at the sheep-fold down by the creek, or along the white road that led to the mountain pastures. I had left even their spirits behind me. The wagon jolted on, carrying me I knew not whither. I don't think I was homesick. If we never arrived anywhere, it did not matter. Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out. I did not say my prayers that night: here, I felt, what would be would be.

Jim Burden seems to be returning to the first primeval chaos. He seems to be going outside of civilization. No, more than that--he seems to be going back to some time before there were men, outside man's jurisdiction. He seems to be going back to a time when men's souls were not regarded as inhabiting the skies, but as living in trees and roads and so forth, the prime time described in Ovid's Metamorphoses perhaps. He seems to be going to a time when there are no gods or when men do not think of gods. Is this a journey not only into the West but back to the beginning of beginnings in time, as it were?

- 3.8. (p. 8) I don't believe that Jim Burden is speaking here. Willa Cather is. I must check her biography. Who does speak in this novel? Willa Cather or Jim Burden?

I think that Jim Burden and Jake Marpole are twins under the skin. They both have the same name--Jacob or James. The old man, Jacob's grandfather, looks like someone from the Near East, someone who has lived in the desert; he must be Abraham. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Grandfather, Father, and Jim-Jacob.

- 3.9. (p. 12) The missionary said it was like the beard of an Arabian sheik. I think that the old man is a kind of Abraham; "he led his people to the land of promise."

- 3.10. Otto is a German. While we have Germans and Americans, we will have Czechs and Russians. Now I've changed my mind. Cather's theme is not the progress through time from chaos to modern civilization; it is how you make one nation out of every nation that dwells upon the face of the earth.
- 3.11. The family reads the Old Testament: it is a kind of Old Testament clan-family. Does it read the Old Testament because what it is doing is like what Old Testament people were doing in seeking the land of promise? Or does this family read the Old Testament simply out of habit? Some people read the Old Testament for its 'poetry'. The old man reads in the Psalms (p. 13) about the joy of Israel in coming in to its inheritance--the inheritance of Jacob and Abraham. (Psalm 47)

O clap your hands all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph; the Lord most high is terrible. He is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us. The excellency of Jacob whom he loved, Selah. God has gone up with a shout. The Lord is the sound of the trumpet. Sing praises to God. Sing praises, sing praises unto our King. Sing praises for God is the King of all the earth. Sing ye praises of understanding. God reigns over the heathen. God sitteth upon the throne of understanding. God reigns over the heathen. God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong unto God. He is greatly exalted.

Nebraska in the 1880's: clap and shout?

- 3.12. Cather frequently speaks of the sod houses and dug-outs as caves or cave-like. We are, in this story, at the beginning when men lived in caves--or are we? Is this just a fanciful thought of mine?
- 3.13. (p. 15) As I looked about me I felt that the grass was the country, as the water is the sea. The red of the grass made all the great prairie the colour of wine-stains, or of certain seaweeds when they are first washed up. And there was so much motion in it; the whole country seemed, somehow, to be running.

Homer's wine-dark sea. One could learn to write that way. How would one do it? The city as a forest; the city street as a mole path?

- 3.14. There is a garden in this country now; the patriarchs have made a garden--chaos shaped into a garden. There is some taming which has been done; men here now. The description on page 16 is different from the description on pages 7 and 8, but the child still sees the world as flat. Perhaps Willa Cather is saying that--though all of history has already been 'gone by'--the child in his mind is, as it were, beginning all over and re-experiencing all of it beginning with chaos and then the garden with the patriarchs all around him.
- 3.15. Willa Cather likes gardens. What is it about gardens that interests



her? The people, the soil, the vegetable, the interaction of soil and plant and man.

3.16. (p. 17) In a new country a body feels friendly to the animals.

3.17. (p. 18) The child, amid the grasshoppers and bugs and dry vines, is in dragon land, or is he?

I kept as still as I could. Nothing happened. I did not expect anything to happen. I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep.

Jim Burden is not now speaking as a child but as an adult. What does he believe? Does he still believe the Old Testament patriarchal religion of his grandfather?

3.18. (p. 19) Bohemians and Americans

3.19. Krajiek is a symbol of the power of language in its pernicious form. Krajiek is American materialism; Krajiek is Babbitt. Shimerda is Bohemian culture uprooted and brought to America; a weaver, a craftsman, a musician, a city man uprooted and tossed into chaos--asked to be a cave man, asked to live in a hole in the ground like a gopher (pp. 21, 22). Henry James in reverse.

3.20. (p. 21) Jim Burden sees Nebraska's landscape through romantic eyes, or are his eyes the eyes of innocent, unfallen man?

3.21. (pp. 22 ff.) Bridging the gap is a matter of handing a loaf of bread from one man to another. Antonia is her eyes. What is Willa Cather saying in saying that her eyes are "big and warm and full of light like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood"? Always the light in Antonia comes from inside the frame of her body (pp. 23, 24).

3.22. They are inside the cave and one of the children is a half-man, a Neanderthal.

3.23. No light comes from within Mr. Shimerda. Mr. Shimerda--is he or is he not, one of the patriarchs? He seems to have come from one of the cities of the Danube to the tunes of violins and waltzes rather than from Sinai or Palestine or the deserts of the East to the tune of thunder on a wild mountain top.

3.24. Learning language: it is as if Antonia is learning to talk for the first time--perhaps like Adam and Eve giving names to the plants and to the animals. All of us learn to talk for the first time, some of us in one language and some in many. One of the curious things about the story is that all of these experiences are, as it were, experiences

that the human race has already had and yet which it has to have over and over and over again. Does Cather's style produce this sense?

- 3.25. (p. 32) The power of language: "They hated Krajiek, but they clung to him because he was the only human being with whom they could talk or from whom they could get information."
- 3.26. (pp. 32 ff.) The prairie is hot and the bitterness of it comes through even for a romantic; Pavel is an anarchist who has a suspicious look. Perhaps all of the people on this frontier are anarchists trying to escape from organized society. In order to escape it, they are forced into creating another kind of organized society.
- 3.27. Watermelons--watermelons appear over and over in this section. Do they have a special symbolism or resonance as connected with Willa Cather's interest in gardens? In the back of the imagination of all these people are the memories of another country and another kind of culture and another way of looking at life. Is a theme of the story how the dreams which imagination constructs must be re-shaped when a man goes to a new country? Or is the theme of the story that a man must bring his old dreams with him and cling to them in a new country, otherwise he'll go mad?

3.28. (p. 39) The bug--what is the significance of it?

3.29. (p. 40)

All those fall afternoons were the same, but I never got used to them. As far as we could see, the miles of copper-red grass were drenched in sunlight that was stronger and fiercer than at any other time of the day. The blond cornfields were red gold, the haystacks turned rosy and threw long shadows. The whole prairie was like the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. That hour always had the exultation of victory, of triumphant ending, like a hero's death--heroes who died young and gloriously. It was a sudden transfiguration, a lifting-up of day.

Jim Burden thinks he sees the burning bush, but is it Willa Cather's point that this is all illusion? Perhaps the first bush was an 'illusion' in the mind of the patriarch who led men to the land of promise--is that Cather's gist?

3.30. Why is Shimerda without purpose? Shimerda has a stag on his gun--is he Actaeon? Is this world of the frontier both the world of the Hebrew Old Testament and the world of classical myth come alive in a new country? Is Shimerda Actaeon destroyed by his own dogs and destroying himself?

3.31. (pp. 45-47) Dog Town: Dog Town, a model of what People Town should be/ Dog Town a model for what People Town should not be. The encounter with the snake in the middle of the burrow of the dogs--the snake is the symbol for perverse vitality. But cf. p. 47:

I took a long piece of string from my pocket, and she lifted his head with the spade while I tied a noose around it. We pulled him out straight and measured him by my riding-quirt; he was about five and a half feet long. He had twelve rattles, but they were broken off before they began to taper, so I insisted that he must once have had twenty-four. I explained to Antonia how this meant that he was twenty-four years old, that he must have been there when white men first came, left on from buffalo and Indian times. As I turned him over, I began to feel proud of him, to have a kind of respect for his age and size. He seemed like the ancient, eldest Evil. Certainly his kind have left horrible unconscious memories in all warm-blooded life. When we dragged him down into the draw, Dude sprang off to the end of his tether and shivered all over--wouldn't let us come near him.

The Serpent in the Garden. he seemed like "the ancient, eldest evil"; but is he? Is Willa Cather saying that the symbolism which Jim Burden sees in the snake is a specious symbolism? Jim Burden is the conqueror of the snake; does that make him some kind of Savior figure? Probably so/ probably not? Are these snakes the snakes that confronted the Children of Israel in the wilderness? Is Cather saying that snakes are only conquered by ingenuity, not by serpents lifted up in the wilderness. American materialism: Wick Cutter: (p. 50). The snake is simply a beast to be killed; it only seemed like the ancient, evil one--like the illusory burning bush.

- 3.32. (pp 56 ff.) The story of the wolves: does the fittest survive as the wolves come on to kill? Is the real story of the Fall--the real story of human evil--in Willa Cather how men feed one another to the wolves to survive. There is no inherited evil in this story, and the serpent whom Jim imagines as the first ancient evil one is just another critter which is evil only to a wild romantic's imagination. Cather is saying that we are not evil by inheritance; we are predatory by instinct. The frontier is a place where the fit survive and men feed one another to the wolves.

Pavel becomes a wolf in this story.

Is it a good story?

- 3.33. (p. 62) The Indians tortured prisoners at a stake; when they ran races or trained horses they made a ritual circle. The torturing of prisoners was an Indian rite; one of the ways of securing fertility in spring was to sacrifice human beings. The circle seems to Jim Burden to suggest that winter will be all right. He doesn't understand the old culture of the land and doesn't have a new spring rite. And yet he has moved from watching the cave man's life to watching tribal life.
- 3.34. (p. 66) Swiss Family Robinson: what's the story? "I am a cowboy and I know I've done wrong." "Bury me not on the lone prairie." The myths of the prairie?



- 3.35. Story telling time: Pavel's wolves now become in story wolves and bears and wildcats and panthers and outlaws and desperate characters, and inside of the house they are transfigured so that the horrific becomes splendidly literary. What is the attraction of horror in story?
- 3.36. Jim Burden's grandmother believes that Otto Fuchs is being protected by Providence (p. 70); the old patriarchs regarded themselves as protected by Providence. Providence's protection is the theme of the Old Testament; it is also the theme of the Aeneid. Is Willa Cather saying that there was a providence in man's coming to this great American desert or is she saying only that people thought there was a providence?
- 3.37. (Section X): The Promised Land: men are made rats in the promised land. Old man Shimerda, the picture of a man whose imagination is possessed by another land and another culture. Is Willa Cather's theme partly the theme of Frost's poem--that the land possesses the people before they possess the land? One of the concerns of this book would appear to be the process by which man's imagination learns to possess what man already, according to law, possess. If this is the case, Shimerda is going to be one of the outsiders.
- 3.38. (p. 78) The Old Testament: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain and Able; Jacob and Esau; Jake Marpole and Jim Burden; Grandmother and the Shimerda's. Jim Burden's family is killing someone (pp 78,79).
- 3.39. The Christmas scenes: all through the first book, one is reminded not only of European ways of looking at experience, but of nineteenth century European history: Jim's Christmas pictures--Napoleon announcing his divorce to Josephine, the hatred between Austrians and Bohemians reflecting tensions within the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- 3.40. What is Willa Cather saying through her description of the rendering of the Christmas story in paper (p. 83)? Otto Fuchs' trunk contains a bleeding heart in tufts of paper lace, three kings gorgeously appareled, the ox and the ass and the shepherds, the baby in the manger, a group of angels singing, camels and leopards held by the black slave of the three kings.

Our tree became the talking tree of the fairy tale; legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches. Grandmother said it reminded her of the Tree of Knowledge. We put sheets of cotton wool under it for a snow-field, and Jake's pocket-mirror for a frozen lake.

Is this just an ordinary Christmas tree or does its symbolism extend beyond that of the conventional Yule tree? The serpent was in the Tree of Knowledge.

- 3.41. The visit of Mr. Shimerda--the antagonism of Protestant and Catholic brought to the new world? Jim Burden, saying this, not understanding as a child, re-exploring it in memory. Are both Protestant and Catholic out of place in the new chaos of the frontier?



- 3.42. Music of the old world has gone out of Shimerda; the light has gone out of him. New country.

What is Cather saying through the description of the relationship between man and woman in the Shimerda family? Antonia will be like her Mother.

- 3.43. (p. 90) 'Your grandfather is rich.' Jim Burden does see, he understands all of the weight of what Antonia is saying. Big, bold, understanding, unselfish boy.
- 3.44. The bullfight and then the storm--the animals wild with omnipotence in the warm weather, reduced to nothing in the storm: a picture of a force, of the environment--the promised land.
- 3.45. (Section XIV) Old Shimerda, dead in a stable right after the Christ Child is seen alive in the stable: "The prayers of all good people are good" (p. 88). The storm which tamed the bulls, destroyed Shimerda. And what, to Shimerda, was the symbolism of the silk neck-cloth folded?
- 3.46. Robinson Crusoe: the myth of the frontier.
- 3.47. (p. 102) The picture of the place where Shimerda's music hung in the air and where his light left him.
- 3.48. (pp. 106-107) The gentleness between man and man: what is the source of that gentleness? Shimerda died without a connection to anything, without even a connection with the sacrament. Perhaps My Antonia is a story of the search for connections--the ritual of coffin-making, the craftsman's way of handling death--the community gathering about the dead Mr. Shimerda (pp. 110-111).

Perhaps Willa Cather's hero is not the soil of the prairie and not Antonia either, but the human community itself, inter-acting and endeavoring to solve its problems in a communal way. A suicide must be buried at the crossroads--the search for a symbol--a cross carved in the soil; the sign of the cross cannot be made through the ordinary ritual of the requiem.

The invented funeral ritual, whether Protestant or Catholic, the search for seemliness and decorum, the right form, the right decorum between man and man for the time of suicide, the search for the right hymn for the prairie--nearer waters of cold and starvation and tempests on grasslands cut off from Bohemia. Perhaps the novel is about a search for ritual when one has been cut off from the old rituals--cave man, tribal man, farmer looking for new rituals (pp. 118-119):

Years afterward, when the open-grazing days were over, and the red grass had been ploughed under and under until it had almost disappeared from the prairie; when all the fields were under fence, and the roads no longer ran about like wild things, but followed the surveyed section-lines, Mr. Shimerda's grave was

still there, with a sagging wire fence around it, and an unpainted wooden cross. As grandfather had predicted, Mrs. Shimerda never saw the roads going over his head. The road from the north curved a little to the east just there, and the road from the west swung out a little to the south; so that the grave, with its tall red grass that was never mowed, was like a little island; and at twilight, under a new moon or the clear evening star, the dusty roads used to look like soft grey rivers flowing past it. I never came upon the place without emotion, and in all that country it was the spot most dear to me. I loved the dim superstition, the propitiatory intent, that had put the grave there; and still more I loved the spirit that could not carry out the sentence--the error from the surveyed lines, the clemency of the soft earth roads along which the home-coming wagons rattled after sunset. Never a tired driver passed the wooden cross, I am sure, without wishing well to the sleeper.

- 3.49. Willa Cather somewhere said that art should simplify; if I knew how to describe well enough I could simplify as well as she does on pages 119 and 120. Perhaps I could take a scene here at hand and cut away and cut away until I had only the simplest, the right details.
- 3.50. Old lady Shimerda has begun to reject the idea of seeing her neighbors through the eyes of the Old Testament or the New. Jim Burden's grandfather--he not Jesus. Has Jim Burden given up the vision of those around him as re-enacting the Old Testament? I don't know.
- 3.51. I think that Antonia has become a kind of harvest goddess. Virgil, in the Georgics, says that Ceres first taught men how to plow--Antonia, now teaching Ambrose and Jim Burden to plow. Is the figure of Antonia the figure of a veiled, great sun-burned harvest deity; perhaps Ruth in the harvest fields amid the alien corn, yearning for home?
- 3.52. (Section XVII) When does law have to come to a community? What is Willa Cather saying about the coming of law? When did law have to come to the Old Testament community? When did it have to come to classical communities according to Ovid and Virgil?
- 3.53. (p. 134) Mercury drove the oxen of the sun to the cave in order to steal them; Apollo found him out. Now Mrs. Shimerda tries to drive Grandfather's to the cave hoping to avoid paying. The scene in the Homeric hymns is grand and comic (cf. Making of Stories, VII); this one is also grand?
- 3.54. Some scholars have said that Willa Cather, when she wrote My Antonia had Virgil's Georgics in mind. They are a hymn to the arts of peace and to the arts of harvest. Section XIX may confirm that idea.
- 3.55. (p. 139) What does that scene mean? Why does Willa Cather include it? I think that Antonia has in her nature something of Persephone who lives in a cave in winter and in the fields in the summertime. She wishes that her father, who is one aspect of her Pluto--her Hades--

could see the summer. She grows out of the land as crops grow out of the soil in a way in which Mr. Shimerda with his dreams of foreign lands did not, and in a way in which perhaps even Jim Burden does not. For she has no stories through which she filters her experience. She simply plows and works.

On the other hand, Jim Burden sees the whole work of westering, westering through the eyes of the Old Testament effort of the patriarchs to see the promised land--sees the snake which he kills as the snake of Eden, the wheatfields as burning bushes, his grandfather as an Arab sheik reminiscent of Abraham, sees the work of conquering the wilderness as the work of conquering a promised land. And hears this at Bible-reading time.

But Antonia is of another kind. Perhaps Antonia sees the world with classical eyes, and Jim with the eyes of Hebrew civilization; perhaps Antonia with the eyes of a realist, and Jim Burden with the eyes of a romantic. Willa Cather is talking about how one has to remake ones myths when he comes to a new country, or how one has to remake ones beliefs or habits of mind. In any case, she must be talking about how one gets ones toes down into the soil.

## Book II:

- 4.1. First come the caves, then the farms and the houses, then the villages and the cities: the progress of civilization--perhaps the backward movement of civilization away from the soil. To come from the country to the town is to come from tribal society to an oligarchy. Mr. Harling--a stuffed shirt, like the nobles of European civilizations: the country, run by the people--the town, by the big shots. Jim Burden's naive eyes.

Willa Cather, through Jim Burden, is suggesting that rural life is always communal, town life always oligarchic. And what is her stance toward the members of the oligarchy? Does she hate them as I think she does, or is it just Jim Burden?

- 4.2. (II, iv) I think that Lena Lingard is Venus; maybe she is Helen or a grace.

I recall seeing pictures in my grandmother's house, Millet's pictures of girls in the fields with torn dresses, sentimental pictures with titles like "The Song of the Lark" or "The Angelus"--or "Girls at Ebb-tide". I wonder if Lena Lingard isn't partly drawn from those pictures.

Is she a real girl? Lena Lingard is like a girl out of some story which I read but which I can't remember who drives everyone mad, makes ugly creatures think they're beautiful, ugly men think that they're handsome, and inspires witch-like fury in all women, particularly those less beautiful than she. Psychologists could probably explain Lena Lingard. Does Jim Burden understand what she's up to? Thirteen years old.



- 4.3. (pp. 173-174) The town in winter: the country in winter: does one need a different kind of strength to survive the winter in town? If the frivolities of summer seem to Jim Burden to be lies, they are perhaps necessary lies; for people invent like frivolities to make the winter stay alive--the glowing stores and painted windows of the churches. Is Willa Cather saying something about survival and the stories and songs and myths that men tell one another?
- 4.4. (p. 175) What are the stories of Martha and Norma and Rigoletto? They meant something to people on the frontier. But what is the meaning of the incident of the old drunkard tramp who jumps into the threshing machine? He has a poem in his pocket--"The Old Oaken Bucket"--and he's looking for--water. The world is all dried up for him. Waste Lands. Why is it dry? Why did he choose a threshing machine as a place to die? Judgment is sometimes spoken of as a threshing.
- 4.5. (p. 180) Willa Cather and Antonia's mistress are both people who give light to the landscape, give life to the world around them. Cather is saying something about the vitality of these people, about the life force in man.
- 4.6. Blind d'Arnault has music in him, almost biological music, and when he plays everyone dances to his tune, including the boys and girls. Does Blind d'Arnault come out of Willa Cather's experience; or is he a cliché negro--made up of minstrel show stock image and white folklore about Negroes--as is Twain's Jim in part? Blind's symbolism? (p.191)

He looked like some glistening African god of pleasure, full of strong, savage blood. Whenever the dancers paused to change partners or to catch breath, he would boom out softly, 'Who's that goin' back on me? One of these city gentlemen, I bet! Now, you girls, you ain't goin' to let that floor get cold?'

The prairie is rhythm without sight.

The rhythms Jim Burden is learning at this time--thirteen.

The Progressive Euchre Club is dancing a lot, too; but the dances which are sponsored by the Progressive Euchre Club are different from the dances of Blind d'Arnault and the dancers on Saturday night. The big shots have different kinds of dances from the working people. What's the function of the dance for the big shots? What's the function of the dance for the country girls and the farm hands?

- 4.7. (II, ix, p. 197) I think that I can set this chapter beside Babbitt and draw a set of comparisons between Willa Cather's view (Jim Burden's view?) or the small town and Sinclair Lewis'.
- 4.8. Jim Burden has been talking about inner vitality; the meanness of his description of the town girls (pp. 198-199):

Some of the high school girls were jolly and pretty, but they stayed indoors in winter because of the cold, and in summer be-



cause of the heat. When one danced with them, their bodies never moved inside their clothes; their muscles seemed to ask but one thing--not to be disturbed. I remember those girls merely as faces in the schoolroom, gay and rosy, or listless and dull, cut off below the shoulders, like cherubs, by the ink-smeared tops of the high desks that were surely put there to make us round-shouldered and hollow-chested.

The rhythm of Blind d'Arnault and prairies and of things which do not fear to be disturbed.

- 4.9. Wick Cutter is clean and well-groomed and without music and light. Wick Cutter: let him stand for Babbitt or Gatsby or Red or the Ancient Mariner--the brute acquirer. Willa Cather calls Cutter Wyclif Cutter to emphasize his interest in Protestantism, his tendency to mutter pietistic Ben Franklin aphorisms. I once saw the title of a book called The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism. That title might explain Wick Cutter. The colt which Wick Cutter breaks on the track, the woman he breaks--the picture of Silenus or Pan. There is a Wick Cutter in every town.
- 4.10. Jim Burden is the Old Testament puritan, the last patriarch; the country girls are the last pagans, set down anachronistically in the world of the frontier.
- 4.11. Cutter represents one kind of frontier religion; Mrs. Cutter is a would-be prophetess--a witch-sibyl--Jim Burden has seen her kind as the founder of religions all over the world.  
  
Jim Burden could have been a Baptist preacher. His town piety is beginning to separate him from the country and the goddesses of the country and the rhythms of their dance--the world of the Bohemian and German farmers and the old country culture which they still have.
- 4.12. James is an innocent in a world of experience. He doesn't understand people who dance or the pictures of actresses and dancers. In the daytime he is a town boy; in the night-time he sneaks out to be part of the world of Toni and Lena and Tiny, the three Bohemian Marys, and the four Danish girls.
- 4.13. (p. 222) Lena's music is the music of sensuality and subtle temptation. Tony's dance is the dance of hard energy and tough biological fact.
- 4.14. (pp. 224-225) Is this Jim Burden the man speaking, or is this Jim the naive boy speaking from a boy's side of innocence? You can't tell, exactly.
- 4.15. I think that the four Danish girls and the three Bohemian girls are supposed to remind us of the four seasons and the three graces which often go together in classical mythology. But what are they doing in this book? Perhaps Lena and Tony and Anna Hansen are also the three graces, or something like them. Or perhaps they are a little like

Venus and Juno and Minerva, those among whom Paris had to choose. In any case, I find the temptation to see behind Willa Cather's figures, figures of classical gods and goddesses very heavy in this section. Willa Cather's men seem to be patriarchs; Willa Cather's women seem to be goddesses.

- 4.16. (II, xiii) Jim Burden gives a commencement address. Willa Cather gave a commencement address. I wonder what Willa Cather's commencement address concerned.
- 4.17. Jim Burden is learning Virgil now. Virgil's story is a little like the story of the Old Testament--how a group of wanderers went from one land to another land and tamed a new country--and made it their own and brought the gods of a distant land to Italy, reinstating their worship in a new country.

(p. 235-36) Antonia, looking for her father's spirit, like Aeneas looking for his father's spirit amidst the Elysian Fields, but these are not Elysian Fields; these are real fields and there are no spirits around.

I think that to put this passage (Section II, xiv) beside Book VI of the Aeneid would help me to get clear about Willa Cather's meaning; in the Elysian Fields one has to make offerings to Persephone. There is bright air there, sun and stars and exercise upon the grassy playing fields and wrestling and running of races and singing; there is memory of the old country and memory of civilizations past and men who taught us how to be civilized. There is dwelling in shady groves and making of beds on river banks, and deep in the green valley one finds one's father Anchises. But deep in the green valley, Antonia does not find her father. I could also look at Odysseus' descent into Hades and his search for the spirits of the past there.

The Graces are goddesses of grace and of anything which lends charm and beauty to nature and to human life. According to Hesiod they are the offspring of Zeus and the daughter of Oceanus and Eurynome. Their names are: Euphrosyne (Joy), Thalia (Bloom) and Aglaia (Brilliance). Aglaia is the youngest and the wife of Hephaestus. The inspiration of the graces was deemed as necessary to the plastic arts as to music, poetry, science, eloquence, beauty and enjoyment of life. Accordingly, the Graces are intimate with the Muses with whom they live together on Olympus. They are associated too with Apollo, Athene, Hermes and Peitho, but especially with Eros, Aphrodite and Dionysus. Bright and blithe-hearted, they were also called the Daughters of the Sun.

I think that Tiny Soderball is like Aglaia, or Brilliance; that Lena Lingard is like Thalia, or Bloom; (p. 226) and she was flushed like the dawn, with a kind of luminous rosiness all about her." And I think that Antonia is like Euphrosyne, or Joy. Notice how many times Antonia is associated with rejoicing in the book. In some metaphoric way these girls--the three, Lena, Tiny and Antonia--or the three Bohemian girls, are like the graces, and the four Danish girls like the horae or seasons. They come to Jim Burden as inspirers of poetry (p. 270):

When I closed my eyes I could hear them all laughing--the Danish laundry girls and the three Bohemian Marys. Lena had brought them all back to me. It came over me, as it had never done before, the relation between girls like those and the poetry of Virgil. If there were no girls like them in the world, there would be no poetry. I understood that clearly, for the first time. This revelation seemed to me inestimably precious. I clung to it as if it might suddenly vanish.

As I sat down to my book at last, my old dream about Lena coming across the harvest-field in her short shirt seemed to me like the memory of an actual experience. It floated before me on the page like a picture, and underneath it stood the mournful line: 'Optima dies. . .prima fugit.'

- 4.18. Coronado is like Virgil and like Aeneas, like the patriarchs. He was searching for another kind of city--seven golden cities. Coronado is the father of the Wick Cutters.
- 4.19. Virgil's Georgics, which Jim Burden studies in the next book, are a poem to the arts of peace--the plow against the sunset. Does this define the theme of the book? What does the emblem of the plow against the sunset mean? How does it relate to Aeneas, to the patriarchs, to the journey to the promised land? How does it relate to Coronado's search, or deny it? The plowman's epic? I think, if one thought about it, one could see the plow as saying everything that Willa Cather wants to say in this book.
- 4.20. Wick Cutter is Hades come to carry Antonia off to hell. Wick Cutter stands for everything hideous and sterile and greedy. De Raptu Proserpinae.
- 4.21. Willa Cather's comedy: is Mrs. Wick Cutter a pathetic or a comic figure? What are we to think of Cather's treatment of her? She deserves it / she doesn't deserve it.
- 4.22. The first book is about fields and about the light in people or their lack of light. The second book is about orchards and music and dances, about the different kinds of dances people dance and the different kinds of fruit that they pluck.

### Book III:

- 5.1. Gaston Cleric has been in Paestum and seen the bride of old Tithonus rise from the sea. Jim Burden has been in the prairies and seen Lena Lingard, like the bride of Tithonus with the rosiness of dawn around her, rise from his dreams. Is Cather making some point with this juxtaposition? Cleric represents a dead civilization and arid studies. Jim Burden represents a live civilization and new studies. No, Jim is a pedant, too. The really civilized people are the Lena Lingards and the Antonias. Cleric is to Jim Burden as Virgil was to Dante. Virgil was to Willa Cather as Virgil was to Dante.



5.2. Is this to be taken straight or is it to be taken as ironic? (p. 262)

I begrudged the room that Jake and Otto and Russian Peter took up in my memory, which I wanted to crowd with other things. But whenever my consciousness was quickened, all those early friends quickened within it, and in some strange way they accompanied me through all my new experiences.

5.3. Jim Burden is beginning to see his experience through the 'eyes' not of the Bible but of the stories of the Greeks and Romans. He is becoming a new kind of creature. In childhood we see the world through the eyes of the Bible, and in adolescence we see it through other eyes. Adolescence is a pagan state.

5.4. The quotation from Virgil, "Optima dies. . . prima fugit," gives me another hunch as to the theme of My Antonia. Perhaps if I look at the place where this passage comes in Virgil, I will be helped with the book...

The passage, as it appears in the Smith Palmer Bovie translation of Virgil's third Georgic goes as follows (ll.58-79). Virgil is describing how one ought to raise one's cattle and prepare them for mating:

Commencing with the fifth, the years for mating  
End before the tenth, and other years  
She is fit for neither breeding nor the plough.  
So, while the herd rejoices in its youth,  
Release the males and breed the cattle early,  
Supply one generation from another.  
For mortal kind, the best day passes first:  
Disease and sad old age come on, and work;  
The ruthless grasp of death ensnares us all!  
There will always be some stock you would exchange:  
Replace them promptly, sorting out the young  
Within the herd, beforehand, year by year,  
That later on you may not feel the loss.

The years of mating for cattle come early and pass soon, Virgil says; one must supply one generation from the next before the time for mating is past. Something like this happens in the life of man as the poet perceives it. The best days (for mating?) pass first; then there is disease, old age and work. One doesn't know to what extent romance is in the back of Virgil's mind. Is Virgil saying the best days for men are the days when they simply respond to a kind of life force or vigor of instinct inside of them; then responsibility comes on. Jim Burden, in quoting the line, means what Virgil meant? The rest of the book will be about disease, work, and old age.

5.5. "For I shall be the first, if I live, to bring the muse into my country (patria).\" Cleric explains what this meant to Virgil, what poetry meant to him, what region meant to him.

Jim Burden was not to become a poet or a writer; Willa Cather was. Is this scene in which Cleric explains Roman poetry to Jim Burden also

implicitly a scene in which Willa Cather explains her vocation to herself, brings the muse to her 'father's fields' sloping down to the river and to the old beech trees with broken tops near Red Cloud, Nebraska?

- 5.6. (p. 271) The Theatre on the Prairie: Natural growth or phony cut-flower? The plot of the younger Dumas' Camille--Camille Gautier was a woman of Paris who had no reputation; she is like the camellia--pale and cold. Originally, she was a needle-worker but was befriended by a duke whose daughter she resembled, and taken by him back to Paris where he introduced her to high society. It did not accept her. Eventually she got heavily into debt through her losses at cards.

The Count de Varville offered to pay her debts if she would become his mistress; however, before she consented to this, she met Armand Duval who had nothing but love to offer. She scorned Armand at first, longed for the simple life but did not believe she could live in poverty. Her lover persisted. Finally she agreed to go away with him--suffering as she was from a racking cough which needed fresh air. Armand and Camille then moved to a country cottage where Armand was at first suspicious, but gradually convinced of Camille's true love. Acting symbolically, he grew simple flowers to replace the camellias of Paris.

But Armand's father appeared and begged Camille to renounce his son so that her past reputation might not disgrace his family. Camille refused to listen. The father then told Camille that his daughter's fiancé threatened to break off the engagement if Camille and Armand remained together whereupon Camille promised to send Armand away. At this point the father recognized 'true love' for what it is and promised to tell Armand, after Camille's death, that she had only renounced him for the sake of his family.

The conclusion is admirably rendered in My Antonia. Camille leaves a note for Armand telling him that she doesn't like the simple life. She returns to Paris where she always wears a camellia in public. When Camille and Armand next meet in Paris, Armand insults both Camille and the Count de Varville; de Varville challenges Armand to a duel; and Armand wounds de Varville and leaves Paris. He does not return until he hears of Camille's sacrifice from his father. Camille is dying when Armand reaches Paris. She wears his simple flowers on her death bed. Armand declares his undying love and begs forgiveness; and Camille dies in the arms of her true love.

Is this a reflection of some part of our plot, or is it a turning inside-out of some part of our plot?

- 5.7. Notice how consistently Lena is compared to flowers; she is the grace whose name means bloom (cf. pp. 281-282). The Awakening of Jim Burden--is that what I am to call this novel? First the music, then the dance, and then the big town and playing with Lena. How much different would have been a modern novelist's handling of Jim Burden's affair with Lena? Willa Cather states nothing; suggests everything (p. 292). I think that Lena did want Jim Burden to marry her; the rest of her story represents

the story of somebody made hollow by Jim Burden's making a life hollow--toying. Jim Burden is an unreliable narrator--a villain.

#### Book IV:

- 6.1. Tiny Soderhall is the Grace Aglaia--Brilliance: brilliance and gold and success.
- 6.2. The building of the prairie dog's town, the building of a human community:

The windy springs and the blazing summers, one after another, had enriched and mellowed the flat tableland; all the human effort that had gone into it was coming back in long, sweeping lines of fertility. The changes seemed beautiful and harmonious to me; it was like watching the growth of a great man or of a great idea. I recognized every tree and sand bank and rugged draw. I found that I remembered the conformation of the land as one remembers the modeling of human faces.

- 6.3. Larry Donovan is Pluto-like running off with Antonia, like Hades in his chariot running off with the goddess of the harvest. Shimerda in his cave, Cutter in the dark, Donovan in the winter all play Hades to Antonia's Persephone in one way or another. It is winter when Antonia comes back to Black Hawk; it is already spring when Antonia again teaches men how to plow the fields and ploughs the fields herself--like the Genius of the harvest.
- 6.4. Antonia is the woman without Puritanical shame--she would not wear Hester's 'A' or wound herself with Dimmesdale's inner festering--and Jim Burden seems to think well of that; yet, he is a Puritan. What is the meaning of this? What is the relationship between Antonia and Jim Burden? How can Jim say the kind of things which he says and not offer either love or marriage to Antonia (cf. p. 321)? Is this a defect of the novel, or is Willa Cather getting at some kind of subtler relationship between man and woman, or between human beings in general?
- 6.5. (pp. 321-322) The sun and moon: Jim and Antonia. Being near Antonia is also to feel the old pull of the earth (p. 331). What makes a great description? There are few multi-level sentences. What is it that gives this description its force? Vocabulary? Context? What? I could learn from that kind of writing.

#### Book V:

- 7.1. Antonia is the Grace named Joy.
- 7.2. Antonia's garden picture other than--different from--the prairie dog mound of what human society ought to be. Antonia's family is the perfect society. But, in reality, if its life is compared to the life of society in the city, its life will be seen to be rather drab. The pretty picture here is only the romanticist in Jim Burden.



- 7.3. I want to say that what Willa Cather is saying is that Jim Burden has seen the conquest of the west through the eyes of the Old Testament patriarchs coming to claim a promised land; somehow that romantic vision fades and another vision of the conquest of the West as like Aeneas' conquest of Rome or Virgil's bringing of the muse to his patria replaces it as Jim Burden moves from a pietistic childhood to a more pagan, cosmopolitan view of the world. Finally, James has to give up that myth too. The last vision he--railroad builder, scholar, unhappy husband--sees is a picture of a woman who has given up all of the visions and myths of the old country, all sentimentality about previous cultures. She has built her own garden--her own 'culture' and form of society--out of the materials which her soil provides. Perhaps all of the classical way of seeing in which Burden has earlier indulged is simply illusion--something to be got over to get to Antonia's direct way of seeing and doing. Is that right?
- 7.4. (p. 349) "In the group about Antonia I was conscious of a kind of physical harmony. They leaned this way and that, and were not afraid to touch each other." Meaning. Contrast the town girls.
- 7.5. (p. 350) The Cuzaks are skeptics.
- 7.6. (p. 353) Jim Burden is converting Antonia into a mythical character, but she has become his own myth, not something derived from Greece or Rome or the Bible's historical narratives.
- 7.7. Wick Cutter and Antonia: two poles--the spirit of pure destructive commercialism and the spirit of creative interaction with nature.
- 7.8. (pp. 371-372)
- This was the road over which Antonia and I came on that night when we got off the train at Black Hawk and were bedded down in the straw, wondering children, being taken we knew not whither. I had only to close my eyes to hear the rumbling of the wagons in the dark, and to be again overcome by that obliterating strangeness. The feelings of that night were so near that I could reach out and touch them with my hand. I had the sense of coming home to myself, and of having found out what a little circle man's experience is. For Antonia and for me, this had been the road of Destiny; had taken us to those early accidents of fortune which predetermined for us all that we can ever be. Now I understood that the same road was to bring us together again. Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious the incommunicable past.
- 7.9. "The precious, the incommunicable past." This Palestine, this Rome--the incommunicable past. Is the incommunicable--Red Cloud? Black Hawk? The journey of all men and nations from the cave to the village to the city to the nation: Jim Burden's journey? Between them a past. What does the last paragraph mean?
- 7.10. My Antonia is autobiography.

- 7.11. My Antonia is exploration of the meaning of memory. It has no plot because memories which swarm in upon us come to us because they are vivid, not because they are related to one another by causal patterns.
- 7.12. My Antonia is an ordinary novel telling a story, exploring the psychology of ordinary individuals.
- 7.13. My Antonia is a picture of a romantic's effort to see the world through the eyes of the Hebrews and then of the Greeks and finally his seeing its goodness and vitality through the eyes of a new myth or a new vision of the world which Antonia has herself created.
- 7.14. My Antonia is an effort to affirm that Old Testament patriarchal culture and Roman culture were born again on the frontier.
- 7.15. Willa Cather's descriptions are not photographically accurate descriptions; Willa Cather's descriptions are exaggerated. They are exaggerated and symbolic.
- 7.16. Note to myself: I should take something that I see during the day and describe it--then read two or three of Willa Cather's descriptions. Then redescribe what I have seen. Give your description the effect which Cather's has.
- 7.17. One of the books which Willa Cather refers to in My Antonia is The Georgics of Virgil. The Georgics end with the story of a man, Aristaeus, who has lost his swarm of bees. Story summarized as follows by Palmer Smith Bowie--his translation of The Georgics:

Aristaeus, mythical prototype of the farmer as keeper and caretaker, has lost his swarm.... The hero, having lost control of himself, had lost his swarm and had lost his touch. Inadvertently provoking the death of Eurydice, Aristaeus was suffering the wrath of Orpheus when he descended into the watery environment of his mother's realm. Cyrene thereupon led him to Proteus, who, overpowered, told Aristaeus the story of Orpheus and Eurydice.... But Aristaeus simply heard the story as Proteus told it to him, and thereupon was informed of how to placate the shades of Orpheus and Eurydice by means of a ritual technique resulting in regeneration of his swarm of bees. In the last lines, the productive energy delineated throughout the poem bursts out once more, as from the corpses of cattle laid in the ground a new swarm of bees soars aloft to hang from the boughs of a nearby tree like a cluster of grapes.

...Book IV first studies the group, a society at the height of efficient production, for all that that implies. It then studies individuals, unique in any society, whose purposeful efforts can alone, in the end, keep society operating, nurture its life, and shape its future. Orpheus is traditionally a figure associated with agriculture as the life-bearing, peaceful, and civilizing

venture. He is the enemy of hostility, the patron of humanity. Virgil's Orpheus...becomes the heroic image of man's will to preserve life.<sup>1</sup>

"The heroic image of man's will to preserve life"--could one say that what Willa Cather is doing in My Antonia is fitting various myths upon the career of Antonia and finally coming to see her as herself, as a figure who serves the same function that Orpheus serves in The Georgics but whose story, whose myth, whose life is different and indigenous to her country.

- 7.18. Could one say that My Antonia is a novel in which a man searches for the form according to which he ought to imagine the life of nature, the life of a culture, the life of a woman?
- 7.19. Could one say that My Antonia is a novel in which a woman looks for the right form of life for the land?
- 7.20. One could say that My Antonia has no form or no genre, that its form is something which grew out of the exploration of its subject. One could say that Jim Burden's exploration of what he remembers has been over intellectualized in my notes so that what is merely hinted at, what is suggested, what is a matter of subjective association in his mind, having a hint of symbolic meaning--but only a hint--is made in my notes into an allegory, wooden and crude.

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, The Georgics, trans. Smith Palmer Bovie, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) pp. xxviii-xxix.



### III. Robert Frost

#### 1. "The Witch of Coos" (p. 33)

The good grey poet. Ghost stories where skeletons walk are told on television and the radio. Frost is just having some horse-play, trying to paint a believable picture of a person who actually believed that a skeleton walked. He isn't trying to say anything through the story. If Willa Cather had written this story, it would not have been any different. Booh.

#### 2. "The Oven Bird" (p. 196)

"The Oven Bird" is a kind of sonnet--or something--I'm not really sure what to call the form of the poem. I think that I have to read it in New England dialect. Maybe I should get a record of Frost reading it.

"That other fall we name the fall."? This is just a descriptive poem. "The Oven Bird" says what the insect says which Jim Burden puts in Antonia's hair. Or maybe "The Oven Bird" says what poets say when the Tiny Soderballs and Antonias and the Lena Lingards are not the young girls any more, but the rugged, toothless old ladies.

And what does the last stanza say?

The bird would cease and be as other birds  
But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
The question that he frames in all but words  
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

Falling/diminishing--differences in concept?

#### 3. "The Silken Tent" (p. 257)

The objects upon which the comparison in "The Silken Tent" is based and the object described by the comparison are often compared. The tent is Antonia, a woman like Antonia.

Frost certainly used funny diction in this poem. It doesn't sound like his normal, conversational voice: "as in a field"; "Seems to owe naught." If I could analyze the sound of this poem and see how it relates to the meaning...

Perhaps I could describe a woman in terms of a willow tree, a lion-sphinx, a granite piece by a water fall, cotton candy.

Frost's metaphor is too explicit in this poem. Should tell us more of what his meanings are in "The Witch of Coos" and "The Oven Bird" though.

#### 4. "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (p. 227)

Perhaps we should compare this poem with Willa Cather's quotation from Virgil that, "in the lives of mortals, the best days are the first to flee." No! Frost is talking about springtime and only about springtime in this poem.

5. "The Axe-Helve"<sup>1</sup>

Form-finding is finding in the wood's grain the hints for the right shape for the axe-handle. Form-finding is finding the right plants for the prairie garden, the right seeds for the soil and the right hedge for the winds (My Antonia, p. 341). One must see the garden and the axe handle in the wood for oneself and not through the eyes of other imagined myths and gardens.

Antonia would have liked this poem if she could have understood it. She would have put in a Bohemian instead of a Frenchman.

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<sup>1</sup>Frost, Robert, The Collected Poems, (New York: Halcyon House, 1930) p. 228.

6. "The Gift Outright" (p. 255)

Frost read this on JFK's inauguration day, but I can't make heads nor tails of it. It is a "profile in courage". The land couldn't be ours before we were the land's. We couldn't be possessing what we were still unpossessed by. Antonia was possessed by the land as soon as she possessed it--even as a child. It was hers as much as ever it could be.

Second thoughts: this poem is a piece of patriotic rhetoric which is all sound and fury--signifying nothing. Too bad that Frost read this poem at Mr. Kennedy's inaugural. He should have read the poem which he wrote for the occasion.

7. "Mending Wall" (p. 94)

"Mending Wall" is about the wolves and Pavel.

No--it is about what stopped the fight between Ambrose and Jake: "Jakey, Jakey, sell the pig and pay the slap." This something that doesn't love a wall--is it man or nature or what? I love to see a good wall. Most people love a wall.

In Ovid's Golden Age, men did not build walls; men who came to Willa Cather's frontier built walls and fences, little screens between their places--Wick Cutter's screen of pines--to keep one another apart. Only Wick Cutters need a wall--to keep people from discovering their misdeeds.

The speaker in this poem doesn't need one. And no New England neighbor looks like an "old-stone savage armed".

Good fences destroy good neighbors.

8. "A Brook in the City" (p. 181)

I want to put this poem's farm house which lingers alongside Willy Loman's house in The Death of A Salesman (Tragedy, Grade 10); its river beside the ocean-prairie of My Antonia and its rhythms of vital life. There are rivers like this one in the Transcendentalists and they stand for the oversoul, but this river has gone underground. Putting the river underground should not keep the city from both work and sleep.

Frost hates urban civilization. He hates it because his is a simple-minded town mouse and the country mouse attitude--the city is decadent, the country is austere and pure.

Many of Frost's poems have apple trees--brooks--walls--storms. There is a consistent symbolism--if only--if only I could figure it out.

9. "A Lone Striker" (p. 109)

Lone: strikers come in squads. The mill has eyes opaque and no heart to break; Frost hates the machinery in the factory--a desert which dehumanizes mankind:

Man's ingenuity was good.  
He saw it plainly where he stood,

The trees' breathing mingled with his breathing: Emerson could have said that in oracular transcendental statement. He goes to the trees--a path wants walking, a spring drinking? These things do not wish!! And, then again, the factory is not a church. The pine trees are no church.

The rhyme scheme of the poem is bad and ...

The moral of the story is: Don't be late for work.

10. "Departmental" (p. 210)

Untermeyer says that "Departmental" is a comic poem. It is more than comic--satiric.

On the other hand, maybe the ant is simply one of those whose good fences have made good neighbors for it. Maybe the community of ants is to Frost a model community--like the community of the prairie dogs in My Antonia. Good departmental men make good factory workers.

11. "The Vindictives" (p. 51)

"The Vindictives" tells a story like that of Coronado. After Jim Burden says that Coronado died in the wilderness of a broken heart, Antonia says, "More than him has done that." Just afterwards the heroic image of the plow against the sun appears. We are reminded that where many men were broken, some men are now succeeding; where men with dreams of gold could not endure, men are now enduring.

"The Vindictives" picks up the legend, or the history, of Spanish conquest and elevates it to symbolic level, too. The story is a fable. The gold chain--what does it mean, and how does it link to the theme of "A Lone Striker", "A Brook in the City"? Jim Burden has been called a romantic. He was called a romantic in the beginning of My Antonia. He dreams dreams; Antonia does not dream dreams but makes gardens. What should one say of Frost's attitude toward the romantics--the dreamers of dreams that have no roots in experience? Frost admires the Conquistadores and the dreamers of dreams, who know nothing about reality and live in a world of high fantasy oblivious to their surroundings, their region, their time, their neighbors (p. 53).

What is the difference between the Franchman who makes the axe-helve or those who are possessed by the land or those who mend the walls on the one hand, and on the other hand those who dream the dreams which build the factories and make the cities or those who dream the dreams of gold and organize the departments which produce gold.

I like the jiggedy-jog meter of the statement of the moral of this human fable.

How to live = how to dream (in Frost?)



## 12. "A Prayer in Spring" (p. 259)

This poem sounds like a conventional Sunday School hymn. It is! What is the meaning of the emphasis upon today and the emphasis upon ignoring the harvest? Is Frost advising his reader to take no thought for the morrow as Christ advises us? And how does the Biblical symbolism of harvest come into this poem: "Lo the fields are white unto harvest"; "The harvest indeed is plenteous but the laborers are few."

Frost redefines the meaning of the word "love" in this poem. If I were to give a synonym for the word "love" as he uses it, I would say "l'amour." But the meaning of the word "fulfill" as it is used in the last line of the poem is also puzzling.

## 13. "A Winter Eden" (p. 176)

Someone said that this poem is only a New Englander's conception of Eden or paradise.

Someone else has said that this is a poem telling one that the ordinary conception of Eden is a fantasy--good for a couple of hours in man's childhood. Eden: "The Oven Bird," "Mowing," "Winter Eden," "Nothing Gold Can Stay"--or, 'falling' is a natural process.

What am I to say about the way in which Frost uses such phrases as "It lifts existence on a plane of snow/ One level higher"--sounds like something that could have been written on a granny's sampler.

"The year's high girle mark" is a somewhat similar cliché. How much of this poem is irony and how much of it is straight? What do the last two lines of the poem mean?

Frost is a lyricist; "A Winter Eden" is a lyric. Yet, listen--

A feather-hammer gives a double knock.  
This Eden day is done at two o'clock.

There's a flat sound in those lines.

## 14. "After Apple-Picking" (p. 228)

This is Frost's picture of real Eden after cardboard Eden, "Winter Eden". And then I look again and think that the apples of this poem have nothing to do with Eden--plain old country apples. Who speaks in this poem is an old man, dead tired. And now I look again and the poem is simply a description of a tired old man who has decided that he won't pick another apple. An old man going to sleep--essence of winter sleep. What is essence of winter sleep? Essence of winter sleep is.... The old man is tired of seeking a harvest. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Perhaps just a plain ordinary old harvest, perhaps the uncertain harvest of "A Prayer in Spring".

I think the dream is like the dream of the Conquistadores, or maybe it's a dream of apples which could be plucked from the Tree of Life:

Were he not gone,  
 The woodchuck could say whether it's like his  
 Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,  
 Or just some human sleep.

Uneven lines--not poetry--animal sleep.

The ladder is sticking toward the skies, or is it toward heaven!

Dreams:

{ Conquistadores  
 { Winter Edens  
 { Apple Pickings  
 { Factory Workers?

15. "The Bear" (p. 218)

There are two pictures of the bear--the bear pulling down cherries and crossing fences and the caged bear. The bear pulling down cherries is related to apple pickers--crossing fences like a destroyer of mended walls. I don't know.

I don't know what the uncaged bear is, but I think I do know what the caged bear-man is, looking through telescope or microscope. The telescope is Plato; the microscope may be Aristotle in certain moods--or Democritus or Epicurus. And how does the caged bear get uncaged?

The poem is written in couplets: I sometimes think they're good; sometimes I think they're lousy. Right now they're lousy.

Perhaps both Cather and Frost are concerned about how we dream and how we realize our dreams in this grey world of matter and clay and everyday reality. Could I use that as a hypothesis? Or perhaps they are concerned that we don't dream enough, that we dream the wrong dreams.

16. "The Star-Splitter" (p. 137)

When I was a child I saw the stars as doing things for me or toward me in the way that the speaker in the first lines of this poem does. I wonder why when one grows old, one no longer animates the stars--save for this old fool. The smokey lantern chimney and the telescope--no microscope, but a smokey lantern chimney and a telescope; and this same old fellow does an old-fashioned sacrifice by fire. Animals, stars and old-fashioned sacrifices. Homer.

The old fellow looks at the stars and talks about infinity and is a bit ridiculous. Pascal has said that man is at mid-point between everything and nothing.

How would one ever know the plan?

Perhaps the poem is about the Jim Burdens who ponder the meaning of life--says that such pondering is evil. And yet, I think there's something separating

the star-splitter who looks through a telescope from the bear who also looks through a telescope. You have to read this poem in a New England dialect I think, for it to make any sense as a poem.

I would like a man whose stars were the cleaned lanterns which he carried about with him.

17. "The Fear" (p. 61)

The lady in the poem carried a clean lantern. Three scenes which might bear on the fear--the savage time to exorcise the spirits in the wilderness; a child trembling like a guilty thing surprised in the darkness; a man who is afraid of a wild, fire-mouthed idol discovers that the voice which issues from the idol is made by a skinny mountebank sitting inside. And what are the last four lines about? An alternative: the poem is about what Frost thinks it means to keep a clean lantern chimney.


18. "Home Burial" (p. 26)

I once saw an Iowa farmer in the gallery in Florence which contains Michelangelo's "David." He said that he didn't like the "David" because it wasn't natural. It was too big to be a representation of the human figure--too big for the gallery in which it was placed. That farmer was looking for the right shape for the right time and the right place.

The right ritual for Shimerda's death; the right ritual in "Home Burial"--who finds it and how? What in us does the woman stand for; what--the man:


Three foggy mornings and one rainy day  
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.

the lines are, and to us what are they? The dimension, the power, of stillness.

Forms for  darkness  
funerals  
?

19. "Two Tramps in Mud Time" (p. 112)

I don't make this out. Two tramps come along; a man is chopping wood; the tramps make fun of him. One gets a lot of stuff about the weather--about its not being winter and not being summer. Then one has two stanzas worth of preaching which seems to have nothing to do either with chopping wood or springtime and summertime. How did all this get together?

Forms for  darkness  
funerals  
fun and work?

20. "The Death of the Hired Man" (p. 160)

I don't think that I know what to say about this poem, except that I know its greatness.

I don't know where one begins--what the hired man (with his pride in making hay loads) was or what his brother is, what the husband and what the wife.

The wife is a sentimentalist. The poem is about finding the right form for a bereft man dying or, perhaps, finding the right form for living with death! The hired man did not come here to be abused. The wife is telling her husband through telling him that the hired man has come home to die:

The hired man seems to have to say that he's come to do ditching and clearing! I knew a man who saw an old woman once who was starving, wretched, sitting behind a door of a railway station in Belgrade like a hungry rat. People as they passed her, banged the door into her. She did not have the will to resist or to move. Her body merely shuddered as the door hit her. The man I knew gave her some dinars; without delaying she jumped on it like a rat. There was something distasteful about a starving old lady's jumping on the money like a rat. The hired man is a rat who will not jump.

I think that the husband is a practical man, and the hired man a dreamer. Where is the wife in the spectrum of dreaminess and practicality? Maybe the husband is a microscope man and the hired man a telescope man? But the wife? Just before she says the hired man has come home to die, the poem goes as follows:

Forms for     Darkness  
                  Funerals  
                  Fun and work  
                  ?

And then the scene with the moon on page 167?

I now want to say that all of Frost's poems are caught up in the looking for pattern in real objects, some kind of looking for light, order, clarity, design, patterning in this very world rather than the world of dreams.



## 21. "Design" (p. 212)

And then I come upon this poem, and it seems to say whatever pattern there is, is sinister, destructive, deathlike.

I think I could understand the meaning of the title better if I reread the passages about the argument from design in the Tenth Grade "Man and Nature" unit.

If I say that the orderliness of God's creation--its symmetry--shows us what God is like, then when I look upon the design of the flower, the spider and the moth, what kind of creator do I have then? Hume once said that if we argued that the design in the world shows us what the creator is like, we might well argue from parts of the design that the creator is a spider. And this spider affirms and denies Whitman's noiseless, patient spider. How did Whitman come to his symbolism, and how Frost to his?

22. "The Strong are Saying Nothing"<sup>1</sup>

## 23. "Revelation" (p. 155)

And what does "Revelation" say about God. Emerson's Oversoul speaks--reveals--through intuitions, feelings that nature is alive. Frost is of a later generation, and does he now say that God does not speak at all? (Why do we have in this poem a kind of child-like rhythm and rhyme-scheme?) We've read in Pascal's Pensees that God is a hidden god (Tenth Grade, Man and Nature). Pascal uses that argument to show what? And now Frost uses it--with a difference?

24. "Desert Places"<sup>2</sup>

I want to look at another poem against Pascal's writings; I remember that Pascal said as he looked at the new scientific universe, that the silence of the

<sup>1</sup>Collected Poems, p. 391

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 386.

infinite spaces terrified him:

Not Pascal--not scared by the empty spaces but by something nearer home. Within. I want to imagine Frost as answering someone, perhaps John Stuart Mill, perhaps John Keats or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow or Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson: "WITHIN IS NO GOOD." "I DO NOT COUNT." "OUT THERE IS NO GOOD." But Frost does not shout. How does he say these things without shouting?

The snow means? To me what does snow mean? I should perhaps use this poem as a way into understanding "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

25. "Sitting by a Bush in Broad Sunlight" (p. 192)

And could Emerson have written "Sitting by a Bush in Broad Sunlight"? Could the Frost who wrote "Design," "Revelation," "The Peaceful Shepherd," or "Desert Places" have written it? He could not have written those others and not be a hypocrite in writing this. This burning bush scene affirms everything the burning bush scene in My Antonia denies or treats as fantastical!

Sometimes I want to say that Frost believes with Hopkins that "The world is alive with the grandeur of God; it will flame out like shining from shook foil." At other times I want to say that Frost believes only that the world is alive when men make it alive--make it shapely and full of discernible form--that's the only 'life' the world can have.

26. "West-running Brook" (p. 170)

Some people have said that everything which has happened has happened because something pulls one way, something else pulls another so that out of the two a new, third force emerges. Someone has said that there are two imaginary poles to the world--one at which there is pure life and vitality and another at which there is nothing but chaos and mud. Aristotle held to something of that kind of view. Modern philosophers have, some of them, also held to it. I don't

believe that such a view makes any sense--modern science wouldn't accept it.

Let us imagine a brook which begins as pure life and becomes pure mud--pure chaos--at the other end. Let us imagine a poet who lives beside the brook and watches it pass. He sees the process of degeneration, death decay in the world, the movement toward chaos and mud and formlessness. He cares about life and vitality and comeliness of things and he fears like the lady in "The Fear" who has not assaulted the darkness.

Now I want to look at this poem. The woman--what is she? What is her kind of belief? The man--what is he? What is his kind of belief? The brook runs west. It can rely on other sources which move to the east to bring it eventually to that coming together of all rivers at the ocean. Similarly, the husband moves one way and the wife the other, and can they rely on something to bring them to equipoise?

The river moves on a sunken rock and is thrown back upon itself up higher; this motion becomes a motion repeated again and again and again in the poem. The poet is saying about the repetition of this circling of the water here in the river, this circling between the man and the woman, between the life at the top of the river and the mud at the bottom, that lovers, too, are part of the evolutionary process; the wave that throws itself back up is moving toward the source of form.

Now I want to ask myself if those makers and discovers of form in Frost's earlier poems are part of this process: the French Canadian axe-builder and his chopping wood; the eye which sees design in the spider; the wife in "The death of a Hired Man"; the wife in "The Fear." I want, in terms of this poem, to ask myself what's wrong in Frost's eyes with those who dream the abstract dream--which is separated from here and now experience--the apple picker, the Conquistadores, the bear looking through a telescope, the star-splitters. And looking at this poem again I want to ask myself what's wrong with those who only see matter--what's immediately before them--their own perceptions: the bear that looks through the microscope, the person who has no telescope but only a lantern, the tramp who chops wood for money alone, the spinners who do not go on strike?

## 27. "Sand Dunes" (p. 187)

After what I've learned in trying to understand "West-running Brook," I know what this poem means: the sea, waves; the land, waves; the mind which moves above the land waves and continues to cast off shells. Frost is here only saying what Thoreau says in his parable of the artist at Kouroo or of the moth that came out of applewood table; Holmes says as much in his "Chambered Nautilus."

Frost holds 'mind' up to superstitious admiration in the poem--does not relate it to the waves of sea and land and creatures that have climbed from primordial slime up those waves of sea and land.

Let me say that Frost and Cather are trying to create a dream or mythos of what human life ought to be. They do not create this out of the materials of pure fantasy. They are discoverers, discovering in the world about them those forms of excellent interaction with the landscape and those materials of human life which represent whatever possible excellence life can know. They are form-finders, ideal-finders.

They represent the forms that they discover, the ideals which they find through endowing gardens and axe-helves and so forth with a shape in the imagination and a symbolism which suggests how a human being can make himself a good ax and a garden. Now I'm interested in carrying what Frost and Cather have to say beyond the ends of the novel or the poem. Look at a landscape; look at a tool; look at a community. Let me describe them as they presently are. Then describe them trying to imagine what their most comely possible form could be, assuming that one does not change the nature of the material--that wood does not suddenly become plastic or human beings suddenly become angels or a hammer suddenly become a pneumatic instrument.

Now let me return to the parables and questions with which I began this packet. How might I answer them? One might try to write for one's friends, people in one's class, poems which lay bare the comeliness in a certain situation and which are not based on any previous form or genre or type--try to write a story which does the same thing, one which is plotless, which has no genre, which is not based on any previous set of molds which writers have made, but which allows one to see what one person has called the figure in the carpet. One might read "The Idea of Order At Key West."<sup>1</sup>

1 See Wallace Stevens, Collected Poems.



5

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Student Packet

THE RHETORIC OF THE SHORT UNITS OF COMPOSITION:

THE RHETORIC OF THE PARAGRAPH

Grade 11

Experimental Materials  
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center  
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## I. Introduction

This unit continues your study of syntax and rhetoric. You have worked with the sentence in several previous units: "Syntax" (8th grade); "Syntax and the Rhetoric of the Sentence" (9th grade); "The Rhetoric of the Sentence" (Grade 10). The present unit extends many of the principles contained in those units beyond the sentence to groups of sentences or paragraphs. In large part, the material presented in this unit has been developed by Professor Francis Christensen of the University of Southern California. By slightly modifying his principles of levels and movement--already familiar to you from your study of the sentence--Professor Christensen has succeeded in clarifying the structure and form of a great many paragraphs. The present unit makes some adjustments in and additions to Professor Christensen's method of analyzing paragraphs in order to make it as effective and useful as possible for students like you.

If we are going to work with paragraphs, we had better know what conventions may govern their construction and our sense of their wholeness. We all know how we use the word "paragraph." When your history teacher refers you to the third paragraph on page 160 of your history text, you know that he is referring to the third group of sentences on that page and you find the group by looking for the third indentation. But, to speak of a paragraph in this way is a little like distinguishing between prose and poetry by saying that prose is written in sentences, poetry in lines. It may do as a starter, but is hardly an adequate way of talking about what makes a well-formed, well-shaped paragraph. Perhaps it would be better--though more full of jargon--to say that paragraphs generally are rhetorical units characterized by certain observable structural devices for binding sentences together into a unit. That is, paragraphs may, like sentences, display patterns or systems of construction which we can describe.

We are here concerned with describing what gives us a sense that sentences within a professionally written paragraph are closely bound to one another and bound to one another syntactically as their sense suggests that they should be bound. When we read good writing, we feel that the prose flows from sentence to sentence, that we know the direction in which it is going and that it will not 'jerk' on us. In the past, composition courses have tried to help students to acquire a sense of decorous binding together by giving them vague advice about coherence or unity within an essay. However, it is the hypothesis of this unit that the binding together is commonly accomplished through the use of certain definable grammatical devices--many of which have to do with the extent to which a sentence is or is not dependent on the sentence which goes immediately before it or on some other previous sentence, and with the character of the dependence and the relation between the 'meaning' and 'grammar' of the supposedly related sentences.

We should add a limitation here. In this unit we are not going to try to describe every paragraph that has been or will be written. We will focus on the kinds of paragraphs that appear in argumentative and expository writing. They are found in most carefully written textbooks and essays.

They are not found very often in newspaper writing or in articles in popular magazines, nor are they often found in hastily written expository and argumentative writing. Moreover, they rarely occur in novels or short stories; they usually are not found in narrative and descriptive writing, whether hastily or carefully written. This marks one chief difference between this unit on the paragraph and the unit on the rhetoric of sentences. That unit centered on sentences from narrative and descriptive writing; the present unit focuses on paragraphs from expository and argumentative writing.

To summarize: In this unit we will attempt to describe the structures that appear in paragraphs found in expository and argumentative prose.

Again, we must limit ourselves. Paragraphs like the one immediately preceding this one will not concern us. Within an argumentative or expository essay, there will appear paragraphs that cannot be described using the method presented in this unit (These paragraphs--usually referred to as transitional, concluding, and introductory--will be examined somewhat in a unit in the twelfth grade). An extreme example of the kind of paragraph that I am referring to is this paragraph: "But why?" These two words appeared as a paragraph in an article which I recently read. Usually, however, the kind of paragraphs which we are excluding have only one or two sentences. We will also exclude paragraphs in which long quotations occur. These occur quite often, but we will ignore them (the quotations alter our sense of how things hold together). Many paragraphs in argumentative or expository essays, however, do include more than one or two sentences and do not include quotations: we may be able to describe them.

How, then, are we going to describe paragraphs? Let us begin by employing, in our description, the concept of levels that you worked with in relation to sentences in Grade 10.

In describing the sentence, we began with the two-level sentence, which has a main or base clause as its first level and an added subordinate element as its second level: "One of the most interesting of the Pacific islands was Laysan, a tiny scrap of soil which is a far outrider of the Hawaiian chain"--Rachel Carson. Two-level sentences may have only one added element, like the one just quoted, or they may have a parallel series of second-level elements, like this:

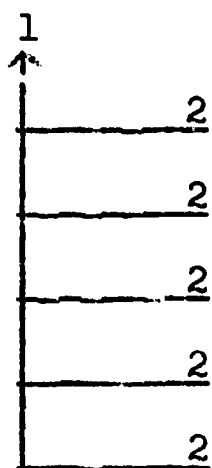
- 1 At one end of the spectrum lies nuclear physics,
- 2 thoroughly confused by dozens of elementary particles,
- 2 employing bizarre mathematics,
- 2 acknowledging the limits set by indeterminism,
- 2 realizing that even its logic is now assailable,
- 2 confronted by mysteries which seem to lie within its realm, but  
which nevertheless are incomprehensible.--Vannevar Bush

We went on from the two-level to the multilevel sentence, in which each added element is subordinate to the one immediately before (or above) it, like this:

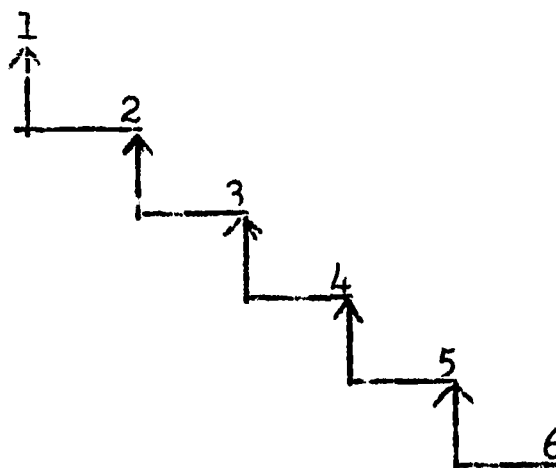
- 1 And I stood there,
  - 2 in the sudden descent of dismay that came with their letters,
  - 3 fingering the envelope,
  - 4 addressed in my father's rather beautiful hand
  - 5 (its sweeping flow always suggested some freer, other side  
of him I had never seen,
  - 6 as the sight of his bare knees, in tennis shorts, suggested  
to me as a child another existence outside the known  
one as my father).
- Nadine Gordimer

The diagrams below picture the levels and movements in these two sentences. The vertical arrows indicate the direction of the movement of thought and the numerals indicate the levels of the components of the two sentences. In the two-level sentence all the second-level elements are coordinate with one another and all communicate immediately with the top level. In the multilevel sentence there is a chain of command; any subordinate level can communicate with the top level only through intermediaries, through channels as we now say.

Two-Level



Multilevel



Levels like this also appear in paragraphs. In the paragraph, as in the sentences there are first level, second level, and perhaps third, fourth, fifth, etc., level elements. These elements in paragraphs will be sentences rather than clauses, phrases, or clusters.

## II. Dependent Sentences

When we speak of levels within paragraphs, we are not referring to the dependence of clauses or phrases upon one another as we are in the case of the two-level or multi-level sentence. Instead, we are speaking of the dependence of sentences upon one another. We will later want to make some refinements of the definitions which we are providing now, but it may be useful at this point to specify that the first sentence in a paragraph will invariably be specified as the level one sentence. The task of analysis of this unit will be the task of discovering whether, how and why the remaining sentences either depend from the first sentence or depend from one another. We add the "why" because we are interested in art as well as mechanics.



We may speak of two-level or multi-level paragraphs. In the two-level paragraph, all of the sentences within the paragraph depend from the first sentence. In the multi-level paragraph the sentences depend from one another. We may have combinations of the two methods in which there are several two-level sentences which are co-ordinate with one another, and then intervening sentences which depend from the two-level sentences in a multi-level fashion.

However, we get ahead of ourselves. Let us first specify what we mean by independent and dependent sentences. Normally, of course, in traditional grammar the definition of a sentence has been that it is an independent unit; a sentence is usually defined as a segment of writing or speech which logically or semantically can stand by itself. We wish to revise this definition and suggest that there are two kinds of sentences-- independent and dependent ones.

We have said that, in the paragraph, there are two kinds of sentences: independent and dependent ones. When we use these words to describe clauses of sentences, we designate as independent clauses of the varieties: NVN; NVNN; VNeqN; NNeqAdj; NV(adv) etc. (cf. Syntax, Grade 8). These clauses can stand by themselves. For example: The girls cut the tomatoes; The freezer gave them trouble; The food smells good; The meat cooks slowly. We distinguish as dependent clauses those which are grammatically related to an independent clause. (Since he was six feet tall. . .; Since the Phoenicians were a seafaring people.) We must use these terms in a different way when we apply them to sentences.<sup>1</sup>

The terms should not be confusing when applied to sentences, for in the eighth grade unit on syntax, you made the same distinction. Perhaps the following exercise will help you recall the distinction.

#### Exercise:

A. Read through the following sentences; mark those that can stand alone or initiate discourse with an "I"; those that can't with a "D."

1. For all men are not equal.
2. No one will deny that most men are equal in ability.
3. Of course, I will.
4. He does.
5. They worked feverishly on the display.
6. It expands when heated.
7. Therefore, I conclude that Einstein's theory is fallacious.

---

<sup>1</sup> Before we go further, we must define what we mean by a sentence in this unit. We will take the word "sentence" to mean a group of words the first of which is capitalized and the last of which is followed by end punctuation--a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. A sentence may be either "complete" or "incomplete."

8. For example, I find the study of English stultifying.
9. Actually, John's paper is well organized.
10. And Keats wrote many odes.
11. But I disagree with the argument that Hamlet is to be thought of as a teen-ager.
12. It is obvious that modern science has made many worthwhile contributions to modern culture.

B. Look at the sentences that you marked "D." How do they differ from those marked "I"? Do the "D's" contain pronouns? Do they contain any auxiliaries without a main verb or pro-verbs? Auxiliaries without a main verb or pro-verbs are like this: "Does John have his essay written? Yes, he does." ("Does" here stands for "does have it written.") Do the "D's" contain words like "therefore," "for example," "consequently," "really"?

C. Make up sentences which might precede the ones you have marked "D." How do they differ from the "D's"? What kind of sentences do you have to write for 2 and 3?

### III. Kinds of Dependency or Subordination

Perhaps it would be well if we constructed some categories of dependency, or labeled the ways in which sentences can be made dependent. A sentence can "lean on" another sentence grammatically in one of three ways. Here are some examples:

Independent sentence:

No one will deny that most men are equal in ability.

Dependent:

1. For instance, no one will deny that most men are equal in ability.
2. No one will deny that most of them are equal in ability.
3. Deny that most men are equal in ability.

The kind of dependence in Example 1 occurs often enough that we will create a category for it. We will call it sequential dependency or subordination by sequence; a sequentially dependent sentence is always characterized or marked by a word or phrase that indicates what is said in the sentence follows from, comes out of, is part of a "sequence" started by what has been said in a previous sentence. It, in other words, is clearly an addition to the previous sentence. This, we can assert because of the presence in it of a sequential marker, a word like indeed, hence, thus, and, but which says that a sentence must precede it. Here are some examples of sentences displaying sequential subordination in which the sequence marker is marked; in these examples we will be concerned not with the first but with the succeeding sentences:

1. It is possible only to those who are, in the old sense of the word, polite. It thus becomes, from one point of view, the flower, from another the seed, of all those noble usages which distinguish the gentle from the villain . . . (C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 2)

2. This is not a state of things peculiar to contemporary criticism. Indeed, there has never been a time. . . (Lewis, p. 4).
3. And the experimental type of novel represents in about equal proportions an intensification of methods and a reaction against them. So that on the whole, the novel. . . has an aspect as distinct. . . (Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, p. 7)
4. Many of the national groups discussed here found their way to the new world and brought their respective traditions. Even the Huguenots made a settlement. (John Dillenger and Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity, p. 89)
5. Only he who had not taken God seriously could think of the latter. Moreover, the God of majesty had already revealed himself as merciful. Hence, God's activity, in which the concept of predestination was anchored, was already weighted, among the faithful, on the side of his gracious activity. (Dillenger and Welch, p. 101)

You might wish to look through expository or argumentative prose to find examples of dependent sentences, made sequentially subordinate by words, such as nevertheless, therefore, for example, for instance, as a result, so, too, indeed, in fact, to a lesser extent, still less, certainly, actually, etc. This list is incomplete; you should add to it as you find it necessary or convenient.

B. The kind of dependence that occurs in Example (2), "No one will deny that most of them are equal in ability," will be called referential.

Referential subordination occurs when a sentence employs a pronoun, a pro-verb or an adjective which refers to an element in the previous sentence.

Examples:

1. Determination by God made sense only to the believer. It was a category used by the faithful to account for their faith. (Dillenger and Welch, p. 101).
2. Inactivity was a sure sign that a man was not a believer, no matter what his profession of faith. This is why the Puritans spoke of the warfare of life. (Ibid, 103).
3. Puritans read good literature, classical and secular as well as religious. Many were outstanding scholars and men of culture. (Ibid, 105).
4. And they would be the last to say that a society should not organize in some way to bring its knowledge and experience to bear on its urgent practical problems. All that the Utopians claim is that such activities. . . cannot be conducted in a university

without disrupting, or at least confusing, the institution.  
(Hutchins, The University of Utopia).

5. No Utopian professor would think of giving a course of lectures more than once. To do so would suggest that he had no work in progress or that he was not making any progress in it.  
(Hutchins, The University of Utopia).

C. The third kind of subordination, the kind that occurs in example 3, "for no one will deny that most men are equal in ability," will be called completive dependence or subordination by completion.

Subordination by completion can take one of two forms: (a) the response to a question form or (b) the expansion of an element in a previous form. Here are some examples of (a):

1. What characterizes high society? Rich men, beautiful women, yachts, racing stables,--everything, in short, that forms part of the dream-world of the gum-chewing tabloid reader.
2. Are these and newspapers hopeless? Perhaps.
3. Magnificent, but is it music? Certainly not.
4. Does this exaggerate the conflict? Certainly.
5. Yet when we have demonstrated the need for this, how do we prove that the need can be satisfied? Not, we may be sure, by exhortation.

Here are some of (b):

1. The subject is as old as philosophy itself, going back to Socrates in ancient Greece. Socrates, the first of philosophers.
2. But alas! the dice roll regardless of his words. Words without magical powers.
3. Let us then start with the illusion of an imaginary golden age. Which leaves the problem of doing the best with what nature gives us.

D. Subordinate Independent Sentences: Subordination by Repetition: Lexical Subordination

If we look at some more dependent sentences which are completive and like these last, we may be able to get clear about a binding device which bridges two independent sentences, making the second subordinate to the first. Let us look at some examples bridging an independent and a dependent sentence:

1. They laughed at her jokes. A ridiculing laugh.
2. He bought his sweater in Britain. Likes British sweaters.
3. He writes stiff, repetitive sentences. Fills his prose with stiff-stuff and repetition.



The second sentence in each case repeats a word in the previous sentence; in each case the word repeated changes its form class (verb to noun; noun to adjective; adjective to noun).

Look at some more examples:

4. Our investigation will focus on words. Words or symbols or signs.
5. He told a story. A story full of pity and sorrow.

In my last two instances, the repeated word does not change from sentence to sentence; this seems to happen only with nouns.

The sentences we have given above probably would occur more often in speech than in writing; in writing they usually assume the form of a sentence which is not clearly dependent, but which repeats and clarifies a word in the previous sentence, placing it in a new grammatical context and framing it with new modifiers--modifiers which could possibly have been placed in the previous sentence but which would have been awkward there. We might have:

1. They laughed at her jokes. They snarled out a ridiculing harsh laugh.
2. He, of course, bought his sweaters in Britain. He likes British cashmere sweaters.
3. He writes stiff, repetitive sentences. The prose of this book is throughout characterized by stiffness and repetition.
4. Our investigation will focus on words. We will look at words as symbols or signs.
5. He told a story. As he told it, the story was full of pity and sorrow.

The second sentences are clearly subordinate to the first in the examples above, but semantically subordinate. They do not, as to grammar, require a previous sentence; but, semantically or lexically, they complete a previous one as to avoid rather monstrous forms of subordination:

1. They laughed at her jokes, ridiculingly and snarlingly.
2. He bought his British cashmere sweaters which he likes.
3. He writes stiff, repetitive sentences throughout. [Here the repetition seems an emphatic rather than an exorcising of an awkwardness.]
4. Our investigation will focus on words defined as symbols or signs [Is the original any better? Well, what is the context?]
5. a. And he told a pitiful and sorrowful story. [But that isn't what is meant.]  
 b. And he told a sentimental story, all full of misery.  
 c. And he told a story, all full of misery and sentiment.  
 [As good as our first 5? What is the context?]

Whatever one's judgment about the combined sentences, the repetition in the uncombined sentences is not hideous.

One can easily find examples in good writing:

1. Unfortunately there are times when this is all our reading and conversation gives us: just words. Words are of little importance on their own account, or for their own sake. (Lionel Ruby, The Art of Making Sense).
2. Semantics is a new word which has come to designate the study of words (and symbols generally) in relation to their meanings. Words are signs or symbols. . . (Ruby, The Art of Making Sense).
3. Language is thus indispensable to human thinking, but this does not mean that mental ability is the same thing as having a large vocabulary. A limited vocabulary restricts the range of our thinking. (Ibid).
4. As physical things, words are spoken or written. The spoken word comes before the written word. (Ibid).
5. These people argue that we have a democratic rather than a republican form of government. The dictionary defines a democracy as a system. . .

We will refer to this method of binding sentences together as binding by repetition.

E. Subordinate Independent Sentences: Subordination by Appositive Expansion: Lexical Subordination

Finally, there appear in many paragraphs sentences other than the first one that are syntactically independent but which are semantically or lexically subordinate because of the use of a device other than repetition which bridges the sentences. We shall call the device "appositive expansion."

Perhaps the following examples will clarify the notion. Often times in speaking and narrative writing and sometimes in argumentative writing, we make sentences like this:

1. Doctor, you knew that I had a heart condition, but you lied to me. A man of your profession.
2. John should not have flunked his test. An intelligent student.

The underscored sentences are obviously dependent on the preceding in each case; the writer or speaker has expanded one item (Doctor and John) by substituting a synonym for it,<sup>1</sup> and in each case, one can easily make the second sentence independent:

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<sup>1</sup>By synonym we mean a word that has the same referent as another word though its "meaning" may be different.

1. I am shocked that a man of your profession would lie to me.
2. An intelligent student like John shouldn't have flunked his test.

We will refer to sentences related to previous sentences in this manner as subordinate independent sentences which are subordinated by appositive expansion. Always, in such sentences, the word or phrase in the later sentence which is 'connected' to a word or phrase in the earlier one can be substituted after it as an appositive or a "for example":

1. One is struck by a few exclusions, of sex and profession from the calendar of greatest Americans. Women have had a curiously small share in the major hero-worship of America--a land which most Europeans believe is a matriarchy. (Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America).
2. Certain professions have yielded few national idols. The artist, admired so keenly by another business civilization, the Renaissance, has not met with such popular honor in America. (Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America).
3. No American writer had received such homage as did Voltaire in Paris in 1778, when he was crowned with laurel in his box at the theatre while people of quality disguised themselves as tavern servants to gain the privilege of bringing him a bottle of wine or smoothing his pillow. Edgar Allan Poe. . .died in poverty, in delirium in a Baltimore hospital. (Ibid).

One might rewrite the first sentences as follows:

1. One is struck by a few exclusions, of sex (e.g. women) type and profession from the calendar of greatest Americans.
2. Certain professions, e.g. the artists' have yielded few national idols.
3. No American writer, e.g. Edgar Allan Poe in poverty and delitium, had received such homage as did Voltaire.

#### F. Review of Dependent and Subordinate Structures:

We will speak of five methods of binding sentence to sentence:

##### I. Dependent sentences:

- a. Dependent as necessarily part of a sequence, started by a previous sentence, added to it--hence, nevertheless, thus, for, etc.
- b. Dependent as containing a word whose meaning can only be understood by reference to a previous sentence because it refers to it grammatically; pronoun reference, pro-verb, etc.

c. Dependent as completing a previous sentence, answering its question, expanding some element in it, or potentially filling a slot in it.

## II. Independent Sentences:

a. Subordinate by repetition: independent sentences which repeat the words or phrases of the previous sentence just for emphasis or for clarity.

b. Subordinate by appositive expansion: independent sentences which contain words or phrases which are appositive to those of the preceding sentence.

### G. What binds most tightly and what least?

A subjective sense--the subjective sense of this writer at least--tells one that lexical subordination does not generally produce a sense that a sentence is "bound" very closely to its predecessor and subordination by expansion generally binds less tightly than subordination by repetition. Grammatical subordination binds more tightly than does lexical, in that it makes a unit grammatically dependent, and the more the sense hangs on a previous unit, the tighter the binding. Referential dependent sentences involving pronouns are so common, so near independence, as to produce no profound sense that they are bound to the previous sentence unless the use of complicated pronoun reference locks sentences very tightly together:

Our two soules therefore, which are one,  
Though I must goe, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to avery thinnesses beate.

If they be two, they are two so  
As stiffe twin compasses are two,  
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if the other doe.

And though it in the center sit,  
Yet when the other far doth come,  
It leanes, and hearkens after it,  
And growes erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to mee, who must  
Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;  
Thy firmnes drawes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begunne.



Completive subordination produces a sense of very tight binding, because it makes no sense at all without the preceding sentence. Sequential sentences seem to fit somewhere in between referential and completive as to the amount of 'glue' binding them to the sentences to which they are bound. If we are to rate amounts of glue from most to least, we might say that generally the following is the case:

- Most: (1) Completive  
 (2) Sequential  
 (3) Referential  
 (4) Repetitive  
 Least: (5) Appositive-Expansion

This fiddle-faddle about what binds one sentence to another most is necessary because in writing, we need to make judgments about whether a sentence needs to be bound to its predecessors and about the manner and tightness of the binding needed.

Usually sentences within a paragraph are bound together "more tightly" to one another than sentences between paragraphs. What makes this? Well, a writer beginning a new paragraph may stop the pronoun chain in a paragraph to repeat his 'main noun' in the first sentence of the new paragraph:

Napoleon was not such a demon as history has sometimes portrayed him as being. He was a man convivial in conversation, relaxed in disposition, of controlled temper and ready friendliness. He was an intellectual giant. And whatever France may have thought of his betrayal of the revolution, we who write from another perspective than that of the revolutionaries of the '90's can see him for what he was: a Pericles.

To speak of Napoleon as a great man is not to ignore his faults, but, etc.

His first level sentence then will not be dependent as to reference; it will be marked as different, a new start. This is not a rule; it is an option available to writers. A writer beginning a new paragraph will almost never begin the paragraph with a completive sentence: the first and second sentences of his paragraph may be independent sentences and completive dependent sentences. Again, sequential dependency does sometimes bridge paragraphs, the first sentence of a new paragraph adding to the last of an old but it is more likely to appear within than at the beginning of a paragraph. That, at least, is a hypothesis to test.

After you have tested it, try looking within paragraphs at their 'binding together.'

#### H. Method of Notation

We will refer to independent unsubordinated sentences as Level 1 sentences; first sentences in paragraphs will be level 1's. A sentence subordinate to a level 1 sentence, by whatever means rendered subordinate, will be called a level 2 sentence, one subordinate to 2 as a level 3 sentence, etc.

## I. Examples of Paragraph Analysis:

The preceding presentation of our method of description is not an end in itself. It is a way of getting one to visualize the shape of paragraphs. A little practice will fasten the method of description in your mind and prepare you to use it to get clear about certain writing problems.

A. Here is a paragraph with sentences which are subordinated to one another primarily by referential subordination:

- 1 The view that machines cannot give rise to surprises is due, I believe, to a fallacy to which philosophers and mathematicians are particularly subject.
  - 2 This is the assumption that as soon as a fact is presented to a mind all consequences of that fact spring into the mind simultaneously with it.
  - 3 It is a very useful assumption under many circumstances, but one too easily forgets that it is false.
  - 4 A natural consequence of doing so is that one then assumes that there is no virtue in the mere working out of consequences from data and general principles.
- (A. M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," Mind, LIX October, 1950).

If we were to rewrite the paragraph into a sentence, we might write:

The view that machines cannot give rise to surprises is due, I believe, to a fallacy, the assumption that all consequences of a fact spring into the mind simultaneously with the fact, as soon as it is presented to a mind, a fallacy to which philosophers and mathematicians are particularly prone, the fallacious assumption being useful under many circumstances but too easily forgotten to be false so that one then assumes that there is no virtue in the mere working out of consequences from data and general principles.

Analyzed according to levels:

- 1 The view that machines cannot give rise to surprise is due to a fallacy,
- 2 the assumption that all consequences of a fact spring into mind simultaneously with the fact
- 3 as soon as it is presented to mind
- 2 a fallacy to which philosophers and mathematicians are particularly prone,
- 3 the fallacious assumption being useful under many circumstances
- 4 but too easily forgotten to be false
- 5 so that one then assumes that there is no virtue in the mere working out of consequences from general principles.

The use of the analysis may be to suggest some relationships. For instance, the level 2 sentence in the sample paragraph is bound to the level 1 sentence both by the demonstrative this (referential) and the appositive assumption, (expansive-appositive), both of which go back to fallacy. Notice that the appositive would interrupt the phrase "a fallacy to which philosophers and mathematicians are prone," that I have to repeat fallacy in making all into one sentence, and that the creation of a new sentence avoids this problem. Again, notice that the word assumption, if it were not preceded by the this, would not be clearly appositive to fallacy, and the relationship between sentences 1 and 2 would be obscure if the this were the. Notice that sentence 3, as it were, adds two adjectives (or adjective phrases) to the word assumption; one should say in sentence 2, the "useful-under-many-circumstances but too-easily-forgotten-as-false assumption." The N-Veg-N construction in sentence 3 which uses assumption in the second noun position requires that the it in the first noun slot refer to assumption in sentence 2, and not only binds the two sentences together but allows the writer to attach all kinds of modifying adjective phrases to the "assumption" of sentence 2 without putting an impossible adjectival load in its attributive slot: "This useful under-many-circumstances but too-easily forgotten-as-false-assumption is that. . ." would be unbearable. Notice that the "so" of sentence 4 functions as a "this" which tells us why we ought to care about forgetting that our assumptions are false. We have then a level 1 sentence which tells us who takes wrong views, a level 2 which tells us, appositively, what wrong views are--their substance, a level 3 which tells us more about what they are as to utility and truth, and a level 4 which tells us what the effects of forgetting falsity are.

Let us say that our author had made just one slip and said in level four: "A natural consequence of this view is that one then etc." The sentence would be a level 2. It would also say something different; it would say that the view that "machines cannot surprise" is dangerous--not that the failure to remember that it is false is. The latter is a much more subtle point.

B. A paragraph in which subordination by sequence occurs:

- 1 On the one hand, conversation, organized games, education, sport, paid work, gardening, the theater; on the other, conscience, duty, sin, humiliation, vice, penitence--these are all unique by-products or the human mind [of the human mind].
- 2 The trouble, indeed, is to find any human activities that are not unique.
- 3 Even the fundamental biological attributes such as eating, sleeping, and mating have been tricked out by man with all kinds of unique frills and peculiarities.

Now make paragraph B into a single sentence, and analyze why the author made separate sentences which hang together as these do. Follow our model in paragraph A.

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<sup>1</sup>Original: "All such unique by-products."

C. A paragraph in which the subordination is accomplished primarily by the use of reference and sequence markers: sequential markers receive one line, referential two, repetitive three, and appositive four lines:<sup>1</sup>

1 Mathematical ability appears, almost inevitably, as something mysterious.

2 Yet the attainment of speech, abstraction and logical thought bring it into potential being.

2 It may remain in a very rudimentary state of development; but even the simplest arithmetical calculations are a manifestation of its existence.

2 Like every other human activity, it requires tools and machinery.

3 Arabic numerals, algebraic conventions, logarithms, the differential calculus, are such tools: each unlocks new possibilities of mathematical achievement.

4 But just as there is no essential difference between man's conscious use of a chipped flint as an implement and his design of the most elaborate machine, so there is none between such simple operations as numeration or addition and the comprehensive flights of higher mathematics.

4 Again, some people are by nature more gifted than others in this field; yet no normal human being is unable to perform some mathematical operations.

5 Thus, the capacity for mathematics is, as I have said, a key product of the human mind.

(Julian Huxley, Man Stands Alone.)

<sup>1</sup>Completive sentences will receive dotted underlining.



The paragraph's level 2 sentences are all made level 2 sentences primarily by virtue of referential subordination, the "it's" which refer to ability in the level 1 sentence, but the three "it's" occupy different positions in the sentence and fit into different kinds of syntactic structures, a matter which emphasizes that the "it" (mathematical ability) is being spoken about in different connections: no. 1 level 2 sentence tells us where mathematical ability comes from, no. 2. level 2 sentence tells how it is manifested in its most primitive state, and no. 2 level 2 tells what it needs--presumably if it is to do anything. These three syntactically asymmetrical sentences look at three different--stressed as different by the syntax--sides of the subject. The level 3 sentence tells us what the tools of mathematical ability are and arranges these from simple to complex in a catalogue: arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, calculus.

The two level 4 sentences are interesting. I am not certain that I have represented their relationship to each other and to the level 3 sentence correctly, but, as I see it, the first level 4 sentence takes up the metaphor of the level 3 sentence which says that mathematics has a continuum of 'tools' from arithmetic to calculus by asserting that, as all capacities to handle tools are essentially alike, so all capacities to handle mathematical tools are essentially alike. The "again" of the second level 4 sentence might suggest sequential dependency, but I read it here as saying "Here is another parallel idea"; indeed, 'again' frequently signals that the next sentence is not one level lower in the scale but like, parallel, carrying the same logical weight, a similar example or whatever. The author is saying "All ability to handle mathematical tools is the same kind of ability though the tools differ in complexity; this can be paraphrased and extended to say "All people who have mathematical ability (i.e. normal people) have the same kind of ability though the degree of their giftedness differs.'"

We sense that this is a level 4 sentence precisely to the degree to which we sense that it is a paraphrases of its predecessor, that it is a level 5 to the degree that it extends it. Notice that both level 4 sentences are made up of two independent clauses and that each of these is parallel to the other in structure whereas no other significant parallelism occurs in the paragraph.

The "this" of the level 5 sentence also requires remarking for it "refers" the sentence to no single sentence but to the whole group of seven sentences which precedes it--"this" i.e. "as a consequence of all that I have said in the preceding sentences." No scheme of relation can really represent that "this" properly. It is as if the author should say, "Now, as a consequence of all that I have said since the level 1 sentence, I can say clearly what I said rather unclearly in it. I say this as a restatement of level 1 and a modification of all the succeeding levels. This is what I was driving at."

D. Here is a rather long paragraph that uses several of the means of subordination.

1 There is really no mystery in the distinction between literature and science.

2 It can be clarified a little by comparing literature with science.

- 3 A scientific truth is impersonal: in its essence it is untinctured by the particular linguistic medium in which it finds expression.
- 4 It can as readily deliver its message in Chinese as in English.
- 5 Nevertheless it must have some expression, and that expression must needs be a linguistic one.
- 6 Indeed the apprehension of the scientific truth is itself a linguistic process, for thought is nothing but language denuded of its outward garb.
- 7 The proper medium of scientific expression is therefore a generalized language that may be defined as a symbolic algebra of which all known languages are translations.
- 8 One can adequately translate scientific literature because the original scientific expression is itself a translation.
- 3 Literary expression is personal and concrete but this does not mean that its significance is altogether bound up with the accidental qualities of the medium.
- 4 A truly deep symbolism, for instance, does not depend on the verbal associations of a particular language but rests securely on an intuitive basis that underlies all linguistic expression.
- 5 The artist's 'intuition,' to use Croce's term is immediately fashioned out of a generalized human experience--thought and feeling--of which his own individual experience is a highly personalized selection.
- 6 The thought relations in this deeper level have no specific linguistic vesture; the rhythms are free, not bound, in the first instance, to the traditional rhythms of the artist's language.
- 7 Certain artists whose spirit moves largely in the non-linguistic (better, in the generalized linguistic) layer even find a certain difficulty in getting themselves expressed in the rigidly set terms of their accepted medium.
- 8 One feels that they are unconsciously striving for a generalized art language, a literary algebra, that is related to the sum of all known languages as a perfect mathematical symbolist is related to all the roundabout reports of mathematical relations that normal speech is capable of conveying.
- 8 Their art expression is frequently strained, it sounds at times like a translation from an unknown original--which, indeed, is precisely what it is.
- 8 These artists--Whitmans and Brownings--impress us rather by the greatness of their spirit than the felicity of their art.
- 8 Their relative failure is of the greatest diagnostic value as an index of the pervasive presence in literature of a larger, more intuitive linguistic medium than any particular language.

- a. Underline the markers of dependency and subordination in this paragraph, and try to decide whether you think that the manner in which the paragraph is charted makes sense.
- b. Analyze the binding together of the paragraph to see if its "grammar" and content seem to reinforce one another. You may use our analyses in D as a model.

IV. Some paragraphs use subordinate members which are syntactically parallel for a good rhetorical reason. For instance, consider the following paragraph:

- a. 1 The English philologist Henry Sweet summed up the structural changes in the language very neatly when he characterized Old English as a language of full inflections, Middle English as a language of leveled inflections, and Modern English as a language of lost inflections.
  - 2 Although "full" is a relative term, it is fair to say that Old English was inflected about as heavily as German is today.
 

Subordinate clause Pn Veg Adj
  - 2 Nouns had four cases, and if at times the nominative and accusative or genitive and dative did not have distinctive case endings, the articles or strong adjectives which accompanied them did.
 

N V Adj N+and+Independent clause preceded by subordinate clause
  - 2 Verbs had an array of distinctive forms for person, and in many instances subjunctive and indicative were inflected differently.
 

N V D N+and+independent clause preceded by prep. phrase
  - 2 Gender was grammatical instead of natural as it is today; there was no essential connection between the sex of objects and the gender category in which they happened to fall.
 

N V Adj
  - 3 Thus, a masculine knight rode a neuter horse into a feminine battle.

If you look carefully at this paragraph, you will observe that it includes two kinds of level two sentences; the first is connected with "full" in the level 1 sentence; the three other ones elaborate in the following word "inflections," with the first two explaining inflections in relation to form class categories: nouns and verbs. You will also notice that the first level two sentence is not at all parallel to the others in syntactic structure, that the second and third, both of which explain form class inflection are quite parallel and that the fourth level two sentence--which also goes with "inflection" but does not relate to form

classes--feels somewhat parallel to sentences two and three in that it includes two independent clauses, though the internal structure of those clauses bears no resemblance to that in the second and third level two sentences. Thus the relationships of dependency and grammatical structure and relationships of content parallel and reinforce one another.

b. 1 By the Middle English period most unstressed vowels had become alike in pronunciation.

2 They were roughly equivalent to the final vowel of sofa, irrespective of what they had been previously.

2 The net result of this change was to eliminate many of the inflectional distinctions which had prevailed earlier.

3 Thus, the forms <sup>N</sup>stanes and stanas, genitive singular and nominative-accusative plural respectively in Old English, <sup>Veq</sup>were <sup>Adj</sup>no longer distinguishable in pronunciation and tended to be spelled alike as well.

3 Dative singular <sup>N</sup>scipe, nominative plural scipu, and genitive plural scipa <sup>Veq</sup>were <sup>Adj</sup>likewise leveled to a single form.

3 Verbs and adjectives <sup>N</sup>were <sup>Veq</sup>affected to an equal <sup>Adj</sup>degree.

Here all three level three sentences, all of them subordinate by sequence (as is the second also), are syntactically much alike. Each contains the N Veq Adj pattern (if one regards the participial form of the verb as behaving like an adjective when set in parallel with an adjective). The author catalogs or lists examples in a group of like sentences subordinate to a single sentence and so emphasizes the similarity of his examples through syntax. Such sentences are usually not made dependent upon one another but only on the sentence from which they are strung.

Often it is useful to use this kind where one wishes to emphasize that several of one's examples or assertions have equal rhetorical weight.

1 That Hilter was a villain in private life no one will deny.

2 <sup>Pn</sup>He <sup>Veq</sup>was <sup>N</sup>a cheat <sup>Prep</sup>at <sup>N</sup>cards.

2 <sup>Pn</sup>He <sup>Veq</sup>was <sup>Prep</sup>a petty thief <sup>N</sup>in other men's houses.

2 <sup>Pn</sup>He <sup>Veq</sup>was <sup>Adj</sup>deliberately unfair <sup>Prep</sup>in <sup>N</sup>argument.

3 In short, <sup>Pn</sup>he <sup>Veq</sup>was <sup>N</sup>a heel.



Try to find other paragraphs of this type; they will give you the opportunity to fix more firmly in your mind the tactics for using parallelism or avoiding syntactic parallelism in sentences which occupy the same dependency-level in a paragraph.

V. From your analysis then, try to draw up some generalized suggestions for your own writing as to:

- a. How to use sequential dependency.
- b. How to use referential dependency.
- c. How to use completive dependency.
- d. How to use subordination by repetition and appositive expansion.
- e. How to make levels of dependency clarify or reinforce the logic or content of what you are saying.
- f. How to make parallelism or lack of parallelism between clauses or between sentences within a single level do a job for you.
- g. How to mark off a level one sentence as less dependent than its lackeys.

Make up rule-of-thumb hypotheses to help your own writing. Don't be afraid to throw them away if they do not a) describe professional writing as you see it, or b) help you write better.

VI. Now look at the following paragraphs for analysis. Analyze how sentences are made subordinate to and/or dependent on each other and the first sentence of the paragraph using one system of notation. Then try to analyze why each sentence is made dependent on the sentence on which it is made dependent and not on some other close to, or further away from, it.

- A. Hans J. Morgenthau, Commentary, July, 1962.
- B. James P. Conant, The PTA Magazine, 53 October, 1958.
- C. Walter Lippmann, The Public Philosophy.
- D. Gilbert Highet, Talents and Geniuses.

E.

Lippman, Public Philosophy.

IV. So far we have looked at "shapely" paragraphs, paragraphs in which the writer provides signals, indicators, or markers that tell the reader what relation one sentence has to another or to a group of sentences. But not all paragraphs are "shapely." Such paragraphs do not provide the means by which the reader can say how sentences are related to one another. We are now going to look at some paragraphs of this kind. Our purpose will be to use the method set forth in the preceding pages in order to work them over.

- A. Below you will find a paragraph written by an eleventh grade student. It is from an essay on Faulkner's Unvanquished.

Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge. He does this without even thinking twice. He takes a gun and he and Ringo go after Al Snopes. Even in the earlier chapters he tries to grow-up, patterning himself after Ringo. He wants to be like Ringo, so Bayard grows up by Ringo's influence, as well as his father's and grandmother's. Bayard's grandmother was a good influence on him, because she taught him right from wrong. Everytime he said or did something wrong, Granny punished him for it. For example when he cussed Granny washed his mouth with soap. Granny would always ask for forgiveness whenever she did anything wrong, and made the boys do likewise. Bayard's father was not a very good influence because he was off at war most of the time. But he was not around to teach Bayard very much. But Bayard loved his father and had much respect for him. His father showed him what courage was really like.

1. The paragraph might look something like this if we use our method of analysis:

I 1 Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.

II 2 He does this without even thinking twice.

- III 2 He takes a gun and he and Ringo go after Al Snopes.
- IV 3 Even in the earlier chapter, he tries to grow up, patterning himself after Ringo.
- V 2 He wants to be like Ringo, so Bayard grows up by Ringo's influence, as well as his father's and grandmother's.
- VI 3 Bayard's grandmother was a good influence on him, because she taught him right from wrong.
- VII 4 Everytime he said or did something wrong, Granny punished him for it.
- VIII 5 For example, when he cussed Granny washed his mouth out with soap.
- IX 4 Granny would always ask for forgiveness whenever she did anything wrong and made the boys do likewise.
- X 3 Bayard's father was not a very good influence because he was off at war most of the time.
- XI 4 But he was not around to teach Bayard very much.
- XII 4 But Bayard loved his father and had much respect for him.
- XIII 5 His father showed him what courage was really like.

When one tries to analyze this paragraph, he discovers that he must in many instances guess at the levels--the grammatical and conceptional direction of the paragraph; he cannot look for structural devices or indicators as he does in well-written paragraphs. He must speculate as to what relation the author wishes one sentence to have to another.

One has to look for the relationships between the ideas in the paragraph to guess how the writer intended one sentence to stand in relationship to the previous one. For instance, is the third sentence intended to be subordinate to sentence (II)? As it now stands, we know it is subordinate to sentence (I), but we do not know if (III) should also be an addition to or an expansion of sentence (II). Why? First of all, we are not sure what is the referent of this in sentence (II), whether he grows up without thinking twice (i.e. without being given an opportunity to think twice), or whether he does fulfill the code without thinking twice. We don't know whether what Bayard does in sentence (III) is a consequence of not thinking twice, an explanation of what not thinking twice is or what.

We could clarify the referent of this with a change:

- 1 Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.
- 2 He fulfills it without even thinking twice.

Sentence three then can be clearly seen as another level two sentence:

- 1 Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.
- 2 He fulfills it without even thinking twice.
- 2 He takes a gun and goes, with Ringo, after Al Snopes.

Sentence four uses "Even" as a marker, but does it really tell us what the relationship of the sentence is to the others before it? Even what? Is it that he tries now and does grow up and even did try to grow up earlier? Is it that he doesn't try now and succeeds whereas he tried earlier and didn't? Some connection is missing. Is it that "even" is a sequence marker which should go immediately after revenge in sentence (I)? Notionally sentence (IV) seems to be more closely related to (I) than (II) or (III). But we have to say here that the "even" subordinates it to sentence (III). The problem here is that the structure points one way, the idea or notions another.

The paragraph probably should read at this point:

- 1 Though Bayard tries to grow up even in the early chapters of the book, he definitely does grow up in the chapter "Vendee" when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.
- 2 He fulfills it without thinking twice.
- 2 He takes a gun and goes, with Ringo, after Al Snopes.

Sentence (V) depends primarily on the "he" to subordinate it, and one doesn't know whether to refer the sentence to sentence (III) or sentence (IV) by way of sentence (I). Ringo appears in both sentences.

Here the ambiguity created prevents the reader from knowing what is the time being spoken of--the time described in the early chapters or the "Vendee" time. I suspect that the sense is, "He always wanted to be like Ringo so it is not surprising that at the time he grows up, he should be under Ringo's influence." I would do the four sentences as follows:

- 1 Though Bayard tries to grow up even in the early chapters of the book, he definitely does grow up in the chapter "Vendee" when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.
- 2 He fulfills it without thinking twice.



2 He takes a gun and goes with Ringo after Al Snopes.

3 He always wanted to be like Ringo so it is not surprising that at the time he grows up, he should be under Ringo's influence.

Now look at the sentence beginning "But he was not around to teach. . . ." The logical or notional relationship of this sentence to the previous one is that of explanation and confirmation, of course, not one of antithesis or qualification. The structure suggests the opposite. Again structure and idea are pulling against one another.

The war between structure and idea continues in the sentence beginning "Granny would always ask forgiveness. . . ." Notionally this sentence appears to operate on the same level as "Everytime he said or did. . . ." but how do we know? Couldn't we just as well put it at level (3) and relate it to sentence (VI). Couldn't we do likewise with sentence (VIII)? No structured devices tell us exactly on what level these sentences belong. In all the cases we have discussed, all we can say, really, is that we have some vague notion of how the sentences are related and that one sentence comes after the other.

2. Perhaps by revising the paragraph we can make clearer the relationships between sentences. The revision of this paragraph will go through various stages.

a. The first revision will make each of the sentences subordinate by sequence. (Note: In revising the paragraphs, we will not concern ourselves with whether our author is rendering an accurate picture of Faulkner.)

Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge. And he does this without even thinking twice. Hence, he takes a gun, and goes, with Ringo, after Al Snopes. Moreover, it is obvious that even in the earlier chapters he tries to grow up, patterning himself after Ringo. Since he wants to be like Ringo, Bayard grows up under Ringo's influence, as well as his father's and grandmother's. Thus, Bayard's grandmother was a good influence on him, because she taught him right from wrong. For instance, everytime he said or did something wrong, Granny punished him for it. For example, when he cussed, Granny washed his mouth out with soap. Moreover, Granny would always ask for forgiveness whenever she did something wrong, and made the boys do likewise. Bayard's father, on the other hand, was not a very good

influence because he was off at war most of the time. Thus he was not around to teach Bayard very much. So Bayard loved his father and had much respect for him. Moreover, his father showed him what courage was really like.

- b. Some sentences seem to "work" when marked for subordination by sequence. Which ones? Why don't the others "work"? Can you set up some "rules of thumb" which help you decide when and when not to use subordination by sequence?

3. Here the paragraph is rewritten marking each sentence for subordination by reference: a.

Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge. He does so without even thinking twice. He does so by taking a gun and going with Ringo after Al Snopes. Even in the earlier chapters he tries to grow up, patterning himself after Ringo. He wants to be like him, so he grows up under his influence, as well as his father's and grandmother's. She was a good influence on him, because she taught him right from wrong. Everytime he did something wrong, she punished him for it. When he cussed, she washed his mouth out with soap. She would always ask for forgiveness whenever she did anything wrong, and made him do the same. His father was not a very good influence because he was off at war most of the time. He was not around to teach him very much. But he (Bayard) loved him and had much respect for him. He showed him what courage was really like.

- b. What rhetorical advantages and/or disadvantages seem to derive from pushing referential dependency as far as it will go?

4. We will experiment further by making as many sentences as possible subordinate by completion. a:

Bayard grows up in the chapter, "Vendee." Is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge. Does it without even thinking twice. Takes a gun, goes after Al Snopes. Growing up? He had tried to do it in the earlier chapters, patterning himself after Ringo. Why? Wants to be like him.

Grows up under his influence (as well as his father's and grandmother's). Influence of granny becomes evident when Bayard's grandmother teaches him right from wrong. When he said or did something wrong, what did Granny do? Punished him for it (i.e. when he cusses and Granny washes his mouth out with soap). When Granny said something wrong, what did she do? Asked for forgiveness. And the father, what was his influence? Not very great. Not from one off at war. Not from a person not around to teach very much. And how did Bayard react to his father? Loved him and had much respect for him, the father who showed him what courage was really like.

b. Now obviously no one would write such a paragraph. So we will not pretend that this version can even be considered. But we might be well advised to use completion in some instances. Which ones? When can you appropriately use it? Notice that we have a clear sense of 'style' here? Why? When might one write this way? Why does completive binding tend to produce a jerky feeling? Do completive sentences come in groups larger than pairs?

5. a. Our final experiment will use expansion and repetition. Here is how the paragraph might look:

Bayard definitely grows up in the chapter, "Vendee," when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge. He answers the call without even thinking twice. Instinctively, he takes a gun and together with Ringo goes after Al Snopes. Ringo, in the earlier chapters, provided a pattern for Bayard as he tried to grow up, influencing his growing up as did his grandmother and his father. Bayard's grandmother was a good influence on him, because she taught him right from wrong. Whenever he did or said something wrong, Granny punished him for it. To give punishment was Granny's first response to Bayard's cussing. Her next response to his doing wrong was his being required to ask for forgiveness (Granny always did ask for forgiveness, herself, and made the boys do the same thing

whenever they did something wrong). Bayard's father, in his teaching of Bayard, was not as effective as Granny because he was off at war most of the time. (He was not around to teach him very much). Bayard loved his warring father and had much respect for him. His father earned his respect by showing him what courage was really like.

b. This is only one way in which the paragraph might be written using subordination by expansion and repetition. How does this paragraph compare with previous ones? Is it a well-written paragraph? Are there places where another device might be used more appropriately? Where? Do you find it necessary to use coordinators in some places?

6. Now we are ready to do a final revision of the paragraph by drawing upon the previous revisions of the paragraph. You create the paragraph by drawing upon the sentences from the previous four trials or by combining sentences from them to build a paragraph where the structure and the content are pulling in the same direction. In discussion, you should be able to 'justify' each sentence in the paragraph and the whole set of levels and relationships which you create.

If I were to write the paragraph from scratch, I would write it as follows:

- 1 Though Bayard definitely tries to grow up in the early chapters of the book, he definitely achieves growing up in chapter "Vendee" when he is called upon to fulfill a code of revenge.
- 2 He fulfills it without thinking twice.
- 2 He takes a gun and goes with Ringo after Al Snopes.
- 3 Since he always wanted to be like Ringo, it is not surprising that, at the time he 'grows up,' he should be under Ringo's influence.
- 4 But Ringo's effect upon Bayard was no greater than that of his grandmother and his father; Granny's was a good effect in that she taught him to separate right from wrong.
- 5 If he did something wrong, she punished him.
- 5 If he said something bad or cussed, she washed out his mouth.
- 4 Granny also taught Bayard the meaning of forgiveness.
- 5 When she sinned, she asked to be forgiven.
- 5 And when the boys sinned, she made them ask forgiveness.
- 4 Bayard's father's effects were, in part, limited by his being off at war.
- 5 Hence, he couldn't teach Bayard many things.
- 5 He could teach him what courage was really like and for this Bayard loved and respected him.

This may not be a perfect paragraph, but it is written to make syntax, dependency and parallelism reinforce the conceptual relations which the paragraph establishes. Discuss how the paragraph does or does not do this. Then write your own improvements and chart and discuss them.



7. Below you will find another paragraph about Bayard written by another student.

Granny is first on the list of Bayard's moral educators. It is through his associations with her that he learns such things as physical courage and basic Christianity. Granny is compassionate and ethical. She lives by a code which is not too rigid and is extremely 'empty.' This code weakens as our story progresses and is substituted by greed, corruption, and death, the emptiest of all codes. Everything that Granny did was not right and proper, nor did Bayard believe it was, but this was his education, his choice, and this is why it is such a meaningful education because Bayard in a way educated himself, separating what he thought was right from wrong. Granny's mouth-washing-praying type of religion is an introduction, a preface, A CORNERSTONE OF MORAL STRENGTH. When she begins her solicitude of all the neighbors it is a great moral and physical responsibility and a peak in her moral stature.

The revision of this paragraph will be handled in a different way. You will be asked to perform a series of operations on the paragraph and the first few sentences will be done for you to get you started. But now you may change the sentences--break them up or combine them, change the diction, leave out words, etc.

1. Rewrite the paragraph so that each of the sentences is made sequentially dependent. Here is a sample of how the first sentences might be done:

Granny is first on the list of Bayard's moral educators. For through his associations with her he learns such things as physical courage and basic Christianity. In addition, Granny is compassionate and ethical. For she lives by a code which is not too rigid and is extremely empty. Nevertheless this code weakens as our story progresses and is replaced by greed, corruption and death, the emptiest of codes.

2. Now go through the paragraph again and write another version. This time mark the sentences for subordination by reference. (Note: this already occurs in some of the sentences; you may wish to make them subordinate by reference in yet other ways.)

Sample: Granny is the first on the list of Bayard's 'moral educators.' She teaches him such things as physical courage and basic Christianity. She is compassionate and ethical. She lives by a code which is not too rigid and is extremely empty. This weakens as our story progresses and is replaced by greed, corruption, death, the emptiest of codes.

3. Now go through the paragraph and mark the sentences for dependence by completion:

Sample: Granny is first on the list of Bayard's moral educators. What does she teach him? Physical courage and basic Christianity. Because Granny is compassionate and ethical.

4. This time mark the sentences for dependence by expansion and repetition.

Sample: Granny is first on the list of Bayard's 'moral educators.' Granny teaches Bayard the moral value of physical courage and the morality of basic Christianity. As an educator, Granny provides an example of compassion and ethical living.

5. Now we have four versions of the paragraph. You have probably already discovered that in every version, there are places where the paragraph 'sounds' silly or where the revisions that you have been directed to make do not make sense.

- a. Rewrite the paragraph, selecting from each version of the paragraph those devices that seem most workable for each sentence. You may in some instances wish to combine two or more devices.

- b. Now do an analysis of the paragraph that you have written. How does it differ from the analysis of the original. What does the new paragraph reveal?

- c. There is still a problem, at least in my final version; it inheres in the word "first" in the opening sentence. This word occupies an important rhetorical position in this sentence, and it is therefore likely that the reader expects this word to be expanded in the next sentence. The opening sentence may be rendered: Granny is Bayard's most significant moral educator. One would expect that the author would go on to develop

the idea of "most significant" by comparing Granny's significance with, say, that of the Colonel. The author, however, elected to go another direction; since he did, he should perhaps have written something like: Granny teaches Bayard. This observation suggests that often the first sentence of a paragraph both limits what an author can say and dictates, to some extent, what he must say! To illustrate this point, let us look at yet another paragraph by a student author. This one is about Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby; the author has already described how Gatsby's dream failed to materialize:

Gatsby's dream fails to materialize mainly because of the differences, differences Gatsby refuses to accept, in their social backgrounds. After all hadn't he spent years building up his personality and fortune to be good enough for them? However the long established rich, like the Buchanans, still feel contempt for the new rich, like Gatsby, as is shown in Tom's remark that "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" made love to his wife but at the same time Tom himself was involved with a Mrs. Nobody. Thus Fitzgerald illustrates the upper class's somewhat ridiculous philosophy of "do what I say not what I do" while Gatsby through the years had really become too good for the older guard of the wealthy class.

There seems in this paragraph to be something wrong with the second sentence. It seems to develop the last part of the first sentence, especially "differences Gatsby refuses to accept," but one is not sure. Now the difficulty may lie in the form of the statement; so let's change it to: He had spent years building up his personality and fortune to be good enough for them. Still there is no clear relation between the sentences; subordination by reference does not seem sufficient here. Let's try a combination of reference and expansion. We then can write: He refuses to accept these differences because, in the past, he has made such tremendous efforts to obliterate them that he considers them non-existent.

At this point, our author writes the sentence beginning, "However the long established rich. . .," but notice that the paragraph might be developed in yet other ways. I might write a sentence that is dependent on the first sentence. For instance, this one: The differences in their social background have to do not with how wealthy one is, but the kind of family tradition one comes from. Or if I elect to write a sentence dependent on my second sentence, I might write: But the differences still exist because they cannot be erased by any kind of effort, even an effort as tremendous as Gatsby's.

If I elect to write the latter sentence I can then make use of the student author's sentence, though I might wish to revise it. Instead of writing, "However the long established rich. . .," I would write something like: This fact of social life is exemplified by Tom's contempt for the new rich, a contempt revealed in his remark that Mr. Nobody from Nowhere made love to his wife. And I would re-word the last part of the sentence, "but at the same time. . ." into another sentence in something of this fashion: His contempt is clearly aimed at Gatsby's background and not at his act of making love to Tom's wife for Tom is himself doing the same thing with a Mrs. Nobody.

Now, I can hardly write what the student author does even though he has used a sequence marker to connect his sentences. It seems that I must write something like: Thus Fitzgerald illustrates in his story the inability of a Mr. Nobody, no matter how hard he tries, to become a fully accepted member of the aristocracy. Here then is my revision, a revision made by developing--by several means of subordination--the first level sentence:

Gatsby's dream fails to materialize mainly because of the differences--differences he refuses to accept--in their social backgrounds. He refuses to accept these differences because, in the past, he has made such tremendous efforts to obliterate them that he considers them non-existent. But they still exist because they cannot be erased by any kind of effort, even an effort as great as Gatsby's. This fact of social life is exemplified by Tom's contempt for new rich such as Gatsby, a contempt revealed in his remark that "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere made love to his wife." This contempt is clearly aimed at Gatsby's background and not at his act of making love to Tom's wife, for Tom himself is doing the same thing with a Mrs. Nobody. Thus, Fitzgerald illustrates in his story the inability of a Mr. Nobody like Gatsby to become, no matter how hard he tries, a fully accepted member of the aristocracy.

8. Here is another paragraph written by a student which you might revise following the procedure illustrated above. You should by now be aware that subordinating markers must be used not randomly and capriciously, but only when they fit the context. There is a decorum to manipulating them:



Even while Gatsby refuses to believe anything bad about Daisy, the reader is able to see his dream fading. One is first conscious of this when Gatsby states that Daisy's voice is "full of money." Gatsby however fully realized or at least finally accepted the hopelessness of his dream right before he was killed as is shown by the statement "I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared."

(Note: this statement is actually made about Gatsby by Nick the narrator.)

Perhaps you might wish to add sentences to the paragraph as you revise it; if you do, feel free to do so, but make sure that they are clearly related to the previous ones.

9. Now that you have worked through some student paragraphs (and perhaps some of your own), revise the hypotheses which you formulated when you came to section V. Make up new hypotheses--in the light of experience--for a, b, c, d, e, and f.

10. Below you will find several paragraphs written by eleventh graders; with your teacher's help and direction, revise them trying out the binding devices and the decorum that you have discovered in working with the preceding material. If you wish, you may use paragraphs from your own writing.

# I

In comparing Walden and Leaves of Grass according to style, one finds that they are both very descriptive. Their ways of description, however differ. Thoreau uses his favorite tool, the comparison. "It did not simply flutter like a butterfly, nor soar like the larger hawks, but it sported with proud reliance in the fields of air; mounting again and again with its strange chuckle, it repeated its free and beautiful fall, turning over and over like a kite, and then recovering from its lofty tumbling, as if it had never set its foot on terra firma." In this sentence one can see several similes just telling of the bird's flight. In this sentence Thoreau tells also of how beautiful and majestic the hawk is. Whitman,

however, uses descriptive words to give the picture to the reader.

"The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,  
Four wings beating, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling. . ."

Whitman describes the eagles as being very fierce.

## II

Emerson's attitude toward life was that of a typical transcendentalist. First of all, he believed in the perfection of man, and in his writings he expressed this frequently when he deified them. He gave an example of this in "The Divinity School Address" when he said "If a man is at heart just, then insofar is he God." Emerson also believed in the Over-Soul, and he believed that the greatest and most important moments in a man's life were when he received divine inspiration from the Over-Soul. He also believed that mankind was one huge unit divided and fragmented into individual man. He thought that all men should do the best they could with their lives, but they shouldn't get so involved with their work that they don't realize all of the natural beauty in nature. Emerson believed that scholars and preachers held the highest positions in life. It was their duty to communicate with the rest of their fellow men and try to stimulate their minds. Emerson also believed that the only person you had to satisfy in life was yourself. If you sincerely believed something, it was your duty to hold these beliefs, even if most of society did not.

## III

In Babbitt's discussion with Moon, Babbitt gives the impression that he won't make up his mind about a candidate until he knows each one thoroughly, but when he does choose his candidate he will be the best and do the most for the business administration. Babbitt is discontent with his married life and looks at all the pretty women he has seen but he is

a coward to venture away because he is afraid he will lose respectability so he makes up a pretty young woman and carries on an affair in his dreams. Babbitt was the type of a man who would talk endlessly about the integrity of a real-estate broker and how they have ethics that should be followed like all professional men, but he was out for one thing! To make money for George Babbitt. He was at best a man with very little imagination. He knew of only one type house and one type landscape. He knew all prices well and usually gave a good deal but couldn't see what was wrong with raising the price if a client was too dumb to haggle with him.

## IV

His actual background was far different, however. In the first place his real name was not Jay Gatsby, but James Gatz. He changed his name at the age of seventeen, because it fit the dramatic character that he had invented better. Gatsby did not come from a rich family, but instead he was the son of a poor North Dakotan farmer. The small inheritance that was given to him was that of Dan Cody, a friend and employer, and he received no inheritance from his parents. Gatsby had been a beach comber, and when he warned Cody of a possible storm, Cody took him on as a handyman on his yacht. Because he was puzzled by the indifference of college life, Gatsby's stay at St. Olaf's was very short, and he finally ended up in the army. Gatsby fought in World War I, and was mistakenly sent to Oxford for a few weeks at the end of the war.

## V

In T. S. Eliot's epics, the world was a very unfriendly place for a man who wanted more than just living. If you can't do anything good--do something evil--just to show that you have feelings and emotions

and are not just vegetables! In most of his poems, Eliot depicts a land which is sterile and barren. A land where nothing can grow, only finish their life and die. The Wasteland, the poem he won the Nobel Prize for, shows this type of land. Eliot's main philosophy of life was that there are two types of life and death. 1) Sacrificial death: life (life giving or reawakening) 2) and life devoid of meaning--death. The poem itself compares the two as to which is better--living death or death giving life a rebirth. The latter the one of life devoid of meaning, is the same theme that is carried over to many of his other poems. In The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Eliot tells the futility of middle-aged people--too young for dying but too old for real life--or at least they think so. Prufrock's life is very empty and meaningless because he is afraid of other people's opinions. Eliot was afraid that soon, everyone in the whole world would be that way--afraid to speak out.

A final precept: We have divided writing into three parts, finding material, organizing, writing and polishing (cf. 10th grade Induction and The Organization of the Whole Composition). You will be tempted to think of what you have learned in this unit as helpful for organizing. Don't. Write first. Then polish, analyzing your own prose to see if the interdependences within a paragraph are as tight as possible and shaping it in terms of the possibilities and decorum which you have learned from this unit.



6

**A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH**

**Student Packet**

**The Meaning of the Whole Composition:**

**Ambiguities, Analogies, Contraries**

**Grade 11**

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Experimental Materials  
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center**

## The Meaning of a Whole Composition: Ambiguities, Analogies, Contraries:

### I. Overview:

If we are to write essays, we should say what we mean and know what we have meant. And if we read other peoples' essays or letters as part of an on-going intelligent discussion, we should be clear about what they have said or meant. Sometimes we write something and two weeks later we read it and say, "Did I write that? I can't make any sense of it at all." And sometimes we read prose and have a vague sense that it has "something"--we're not sure what--a little wrong with it even though the style seems smooth and the argument good. That "something" seems to be in the way the words are used; they don't quite make sense. It may be that the author has customarily substituted one word for another word which is apparently similar in meaning or use. Consequently, he may have come to see his word as always working like the other word, forgetting or not observing the differences which separate the uses of the two words. Hence, he talks nonsense. In such a case, the misleading analogy between the use of a major word in his essay and of another word with a similar or seemingly similar meaning may force itself on an author because he fails to observe the difference between the uses of the two similar words or expressions; for instance, the similarity between "murder" and "execution" (or "capital punishment") in Essay I below becomes the whole basis of the author of Essay I's argument; the failure to observe the distinction between the two words becomes the basis of its confusions. Sometimes a writer will use words so that they seem to say an ordinary thing and also say an extraordinary thing; they equivocate. In such a case, the writer may think he knows what he has said, but we

don't know because he seems to be saying two things at once. Hence, we can't be clear about what it would be like to contradict him or to say the opposite of what he says, (cf. the Horn essay below). Words slip and slide, as T. S. Eliot says; our purpose in this unit will be to watch them slip and slide in a whole essay so as to learn to be on guard against their sliding and so as to nail them down.

This unit follows up the eighth grade unit on "Meaning"; the ninth, on "Uses of Language"; the tenth, on "Induction." It does the kind of thing that the eighth and ninth grade units did but in greater depth and for whole essays. It may be of help in introducing this unit to suggest first of all what it is that it doesn't do:

## II. The Procedure of the unit:

- A. This is not a unit on logic: some of you will recall other units which were not units on logic (e.g. the tenth grade literature units), but in this unit it is not as clear that we are not concerned with logic in the technical sense: you will find such language, as "the implication of a sentence"; or "what is entailed in this saying"; you will find language which appears to be the sort of language one uses in courses in logic; you may have studied logic in high school mathematics classes, and some American grade schools even teach it. But this is not a logic unit. Since it does not concern technical logic, it will give you no hard and fast rules governing what you do. What this unit hopes to help you acquire is the art of being clear about what is being said.
- B. This is not a unit on induction though much of what you will find in it will remind you of your work with induction in the tenth grade; you will, for example, be asked to look at a number of specific examples as one might in an inductive study. But here the "examples" are examples of uses of words, not observations of a class of objects to be described and classified. When you are done, you will not be able to make any generalizations, only observations about how words work and where they are made to work in the wrong way.

Just what is it then that this unit does deal with? The title says the unit is about "meanings"--how they go together to form the drift of an essay and how they may puzzle us so that we don't know what the drift is or if it makes any

sense. But "meanings" don't mean; words mean: we come across words and ask, "What does this word mean?"; we read lengthy strings of wordage and say "I think I understand what the author means"; we say something to someone, and they misunderstand us, and we say, "that's not what I mean . . ." After you have worked with this unit, you will have clearer ideas about the problems with which the unit deals, and you will be able to add to our discussion of how a composition means and how it confuses.

Sometimes it is not an easy task to grasp what a writer means; part of the work of this unit is to show you some of the difficulties involved; still another part is to give you a method that helps to clarify the difficulties. And, finally, this unit should help you see how to go about working with those passages in a discourse which are easy as well as those which are hard, for some writers make most sense in the hard passages and least in the easy ones that we just slip over as we read. Essay A which you will study is a superficial or "easy" essay, but getting clear about its confusion requires all that Essay B and the others require. Your own essays may be easy, facile, and nonsensical; and it may require very close study before you see what goes wrong in their handling of words. The same operations may be used in getting at the nonsense or the ambiguity or the self-contradiction or the misleading metaphorical ambiance of simple passages and of difficult ones.

Now to give you a method for looking at the meaning--looking at the words--in an essay or a letter or whatever: the method is to keep a notebook on what you read--not just any notebook but a certain kind of notebook. To simplify the method for now, I want to present you with two or three phases involved in keep-



ing the notebook; these phases don't make up the whole operation nor do they always appear all together, but if you become familiar with them, you can make a good beginning:

Phase I: The first phase has to do with words. In any essay, certain key words stick out. These words are probably ones with which you are familiar but their use in some cases may sound eccentric--curious and "curiouser" as Alice in Wonderland says.

Suppose in a speech on the war in the East that you hear the sentence, "We must prepare ourselves for even bigger conflicts in the East." I would suppose that you would say, "What does he mean--'prepare'? Isn't that all we've been doing?" You know about the word, "prepare." You hear it daily: mothers prepare meals; you prepare lessons; people prepare for vacations; when someone has bad news for you, he asks you to prepare yourself; nurses prepare patients for doctors.<sup>1</sup>

What about the use of the word "prepare" in the speech. Does it sound familiar or does it sound funny? "Prepare"--does he mean that we need to get more bombs as mother has to get more sugar for her Christmas cake, or does he mean that we have to prepare ourselves--brace up our spirits, make ourselves flexible--or does he mean that we must prepare for conflicts but not prepare any certain thing in preparing?

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<sup>1</sup> You can go on with the list yourself. I don't want to label this phase, but what I have said so far should indicate to you what goes on in this phase. You simply look around for their uses of this word. Get them in mind. These other uses will, of course, sound familiar to you.

Does he just mean that we should prepare by getting scared and excited; is he saying "Be excited"? The context in which the sentence occurs will tell us whether the word "sounds funny." Sometimes a word which is used in a variety of ways will sound funny immediately; that may be why you go looking for familiar cases of its use to see what has gone wrong in the use. At other times it will only be after you have the familiar uses in mind that the use in question, the use of a particular word in the particular speech or essay, will begin to sound fishy. Maybe it never will sound strange to you.

The point of Phase I is to get you to listen better than you usually do. And the reason for listening is to develop a sense--a sense of what is familiar and what is fishy in the use of words and to question the fishy uses. When something sounds funny, you want to stop and take a look at it; it may not only sound strange, but may be strange as well. And, often times people say strange things in a way that makes them sound familiar. If one just passes the familiar-sounding by, he may miss the strangeness of what's being said, but if he comes to notice that the familiar ring hides something else, then he can begin to deal with it accordingly. At any rate this phase, this looking at the familiar and the strange uses of a particular word or phrase, helps to bring out the abuse of words.

Phase II: And phase two follows close on Phase one's heels. With these instances of the familiar use of the word in mind, you can begin to ask questions about the use of the word in the essay.

Remember that our supposed essay sentence was, "We must prepare our-

selves for even bigger conflicts . . . ."Well, you know what it is like for mother to prepare a meal. You know what it is like to prepare a lesson. Now, what is it like to "prepare for even bigger conflicts . . . ." Is it like preparing a meal? That is to ask, is preparing a meal a good analogy for "preparing for even bigger conflicts . . . ." It may be; then we know that "preparing for a conflict" implies that we have to get certain things ready for a certain situation because certain people or things are coming. News broadcasts report storms sighted and heading our direction and tell us to prepare for them; preparing for a conflict can be like that, too. In each case, we know something is coming our way, and we prepare for it by changing something in our surroundings.

But now what of another case? What if our speaker's "prepare for conflicts" is like the Boy Scout's "Be prepared"? Boy Scouts are told to "Be Prepared." That is, be prepared for the unexpected: "Anything might happen, and you must be ready for whatever does happen." In the Boy Scouts' case you prepare for something unforeseen, not as in the case of the meal or the storm for something you already know about.

The question is, which of these "preparings" is an analogy for the "preparing" in our speaker's sentence? Are the bigger conflicts just a possibility? Is it like being prepared for whatever might happen? Or is it almost certain that there will be bigger conflicts? Is it preparing for something we already know about? The point of this phase is to see just what the analogy is. The analogy, of course, may be hidden in the speech; the speaker may not tell you which analogy he is using. He probably doesn't know himself. He has used the word "prepare" having in mind what it is like to prepare in some cases, but those

cases may be the wrong ones, cases in which preparing involves something other than what it involves in the situation which he presents in his speech--in which the criteria for the word's use are different.

For instance, our speaker's conception of preparing might be that we should be ready for everything as Boy Scouts are but he might nevertheless use a language which suggests that we should be ready for conflicts which are bound to be coming, and which hints that we should be guided by the analogy of preparing for storms and meals; if this is the case, we need to ask what we are being asked to do and on what grounds. We need to ask, "Does he know that the invasions will be stepped up or is he simply asking us to be more and more ready for something horrible which we would imagine as possible?" The author's own use of the word "prepare" may have confused him; he may not himself be certain whether he is recommending making more equipment available for a clear and present danger or getting oneself ready for any eventuality by getting in the right frame of mind. But he may not have thought to consider that if he is saying both things, consciously or unconsciously, then he may be recommending something impossible or nonsensical or foolish. For instance, he may have started with the former assumption--that the enemy would pour in more men--and have found it to have no basis; he may then have stuck to his guns anyway thinking that he could recommend preparation because "someone might know of a clear and present danger" and, anyway, because it is good to be ready for anything; that is, he will, to be on the safe side, use "prepare" to recommend both things--getting things ready and getting oneself set. We will explore this further in our discussion of Phase III.



At any rate, this phase should help you to draw out how it is the author may be looking at "preparing," what he may be thinking about, what it is like to prepare in the specific case that he is writing about.

Phase III: The second phase may lead to a third. As was noted above, it is not easy to see just what analogy underlies an author's use of a word or phrase. It is just as difficult, if not more so, for the author himself to see it. That is, sometimes when we write, we are unaware of just how we are looking at something, just what contexts in which the word we are using are analogous, or seemingly analogous, to the one we are writing about; we may be unaware that we are allowing an analogous situation in which a word is used to guide or misguide our new use of a word.

Suppose for a minute that, as is often the case, the United States becomes involved in a crisis in a place in the world other than in the East--let us say Berlin. When we are faced with two military obligations, success may depend on our being able to divide forces properly--sending so many to Berlin and so many to the East. And now suppose our speaker speaks before those people who are trying to decide how to divide our troops. He says to them, "We must prepare ourselves for even bigger conflicts in the East." Why would he say this? Perhaps because he knows with a fair degree of certainty that the enemy is going to enlarge the war and, soon. That is, what he knows is like knowing there's a storm coming. Is what he says good advice? Would the people he is talking to feel prone to take troops from Germany and send them to Asia. Probably! What he has said makes sense. Of course, if you say to him that he was

looking at preparing for trouble in the East as like preparing for a storm that was forecast, he might say, "I'd never thought about it like that." But you can see that whether he did or not, that is still the analogy in this case. And here it is a good one. For the two contexts which we put around the word are very like to one another.

But now suppose he hasn't any information of the sort assumed above and that he has put another context around the word "prepare"--the Boy Scout context. What he means is that in war you can never tell what will happen and you don't want to be caught napping. Will it still be good advice for the people he's talking to? Will they feel prone to take troops away from a real and present danger in order to be prepared for the unforeseen in Asia? They may, but then they will be deceived. They will be acting on the basis of one use when the other use was appropriate to the context. The man in question, our speaker, is no longer making sense. "Send troops to the Yeman; we can't be too prepared; we never can know when there will be trouble anywhere in the world; readiness is everything."

Here our essayist may not see that he is looking at the situation by analogy with scouting's "Be Prepared;" that the criteria which would allow him to use one use of prepare are not present in the situation, and that it is this use of prepare which requires bringing in equipment, troops, etc., to meet a clear and present danger.

However, his audience may include people who know that success in war depends on establishing a clear system of priorities for the distribution of a necessarily limited number of men and arms to meet probably crises. And if

they do not react with alacrity, our speaker may describe his audience as not caring about "preparedness" whereas actually it has perceived that our speaker is importing a misleading analogous context for the use of "prepare" and imposed its patterns on a situation where "to prepare" would be to waste weapons, men, and psychological energy on a place where no particular danger is foreseen and, necessarily, to take them from places where danger is foreseen. And if they do respond and care for "preparedness" in our author's sense ("Are we prepared in Europe today?"), will they then be able to assign troops so as to be "prepared" where the context for its use is the appearance of a clear and present danger?

This may all work backwards. By looking at the context which a speaker or essayist puts around a word, you may be helped to see what is the analogous context which guided him to select the expression which he selected and to determine whether the analogous context is really analogous, whether the word works in the same way in both contexts.

These three phases give one a start in studying an essay.

- I. Pick out key words; listen to them.
- II. Gather other analogous contexts in which the word is used; listen again; perhaps hear something fishy or curious or a little funny in the use of the word in the present context.
- III. Find out how the author is looking at what he is saying, find out his point; this may involve getting clear about ambiguities in his point or about what it would be like to contradict his point.

This method should give you a good start on a notebook, although we may have to add other phases later on. You may not use all of these methods in any

one case. But you will be working with phases I, II, and III, in the work which follows. At first the author of the packet will be helping you by making his own notebook. Then you will be on your own. And even when you are being helped, this help will not be great. The author will at first suggest things, but you must follow and accept or reject his suggestions. It won't be as if someone does it for you and you watch to see how it's done. The only way to get a hold on the work set forth here is to do it.

The author of this packet is like you; he will take the essays, sentences, and words. There are no formulae which he can apply that will enable him to finish his inquiry long before you do. He can't do his work alone and then present you with conclusions. There are a number of possibilities in any one problem and to say "this is right" would be an error. He has to hear, try out, get the point; you have to do the same thing with other words and phrases. If the author were just to present his own conclusions, then what this packet would present would not be a method but a matter.

Phases I and II are basic in the A exercises below; Phase III is basic in the last part of the A exercises and in the B exercises below.

#### A Exercises: Phases I and II; and III

What you will be seeing when you read the "A" exercises is the author's working in his notebook, picking out words which sound fishy, listing possibly analogous contexts in which the word which his essayists use might be used (analogous contexts which might have led or misled them) or analogous words which might be used in similar, or only slightly different, contexts which by virtue of their similarity to our word might have misled our essayists. Our



author tries to get clear about his essayist's point, to see if in expressing it he can get clear about possible ambiguities or confusions in it.

### B Exercises:

In the B exercises throughout the packet you will have another task, but one related to the tasks already presented. The task in these "B" exercises will be but one more part of Phase III--another way of going about grasping what an essay is really all about. The "B" exercises will ask you to write essays comparable to those which you will read but essays which present the opposite view. By "comparable" we mean that they should be about the same length as the original essays, paragraphed in the same way, and that each sentence and paragraph should serve about the same function in your essay which the original ones served in the essay to which you are replying. In general, the style should be the same. But you will try to say the opposite of what the author has said: one sure way to find out an author's point is to find out what would be its opposite. You will learn how to go about arriving at this "opposite view."

That this unit is not interested in logic is especially evident in the "B" exercises; in logic the way to find the opposite is to form it. There is no searching and finding out in logic; everything is a matter of form. To get the opposite you change the form. If the original sentence says that something is the case, you change the form by adding "not"--something is not the case. But it will not be so simple here. Take our example: "We must prepare ourselves for even bigger conflicts in the East." Will just adding "not"--"we must not"--change this to its opposite? Go back to where we had our speaker going before a group concerned with the division of our troops; suppose that he had information of an

increased effort on the part of the enemy in the near future. He means then that we should prepare for a definite event, one which we are certain will occur. And suppose you take him to mean that we should prepare for whatever might happen; not that we know something will happen, but just that anything might happen. And you say "We must not prepare-----etc." Have you said the opposite of what he had said? Of course not. Both of you could make your statements and still be in agreement.

#### A NOTE ON PACE:

Work slowly and thoughtfully. If you hurry, you will miss the point. If you slow down, you should, at the end, grasp something about writing with clarity and analyzing essays for their clarity. Hopefully, then you will be able to read better and write better.

### III. Part I: Essay I

Read the following essay written by a student:

Capital punishment is one of the most useless ways of obtaining justice there is. Why do we have capital punishment? Vengeance of society upon the criminal? Hardly! Fast, painless death is hardly an excuse for punishment. To reform the criminal? Impossible! Does it deter would-be murderers? What are perfect crimes made for? Capture?

Whereas a dead man can hardly be reformed, a prisoner can be re-educated and return to a normal life. A parole board can

judge accurately the amount a man has reformed. Although there are occasional escapes, alert police soon apprehend the escapee. All this adds up to make capital punishment a very useless tool of justice.

IV. Exercises: Phases I, II, III: Uses, Analogies, Getting the Point

Assignment I: Write a series of notes on the essay given above studying: when words are used in curious ways; the contexts in which these words are normally used; and the analogous but different words or contexts which may have led the writer to use some words in curious ways. Then try to explain the author's point or the problems you have in knowing what his point is. I will try to do the same thing.

I am going to start working on the essay given above; the analogies I work with may strike you as interesting and you may find it helpful to follow my work, expand on it, or do something similar to it but working on other words and phrases. Don't be afraid to strike out on your own working with phrases which you find curious.

First, I am going to look around for some familiar and also some not-so-familiar uses of the first key expression that strikes me: the expression "useless" in the first sentence. The questions which come to my mind as I do so will be included in my notes; if I deliberately work with familiar uses of the word "useless" (and a few strange ones), setting them up as mirrors to my essayist's use of it in his sentence, then perhaps I can work so as to get clear about the meaning of his sentence: "Capital Punishment is one of the most useless ways of

obtaining justice there is." The question I'm asking is: "How is the word 'useless' used here?"

### THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

#### NOTES ON ESSAY A'S USE OF THE WORD USELESS:

Phase I: Contexts in which the word 'useless' is used or might be used:

I a. Stealing a loaf of bread is one of the most useless ways of obtaining bread there is.

(Would we ordinarily use "useless" here? Or would we say "Stealing a loaf of bread is one of the most foolish ways of obtaining bread there is"?)

. . .

A screwdriver is one of the most useless tools for hammering a nail.

(Does this imply that at least it could be used?)

Driving to San Francisco is one of the most useless ways of getting from Lincoln to Omaha.

(I guess that you can get to Omaha by going first to San Francisco. Is the point here, "What's the use of driving that way?" )

. . .

I just struck me that in all these cases the implication of "useless" is that, even though something is useless, it could still be used. /

. . .



I b. Is that stove any good any more? No, it's completely useless for baking.

. . . .

Maybe we could get a motor from the junk yard, but they're all useless.  
The blocks are all cracked.

/These things can no longer be used for their original purposes, useless for their original purpose and for our purpose./

\_\_\_\_\_ . . . \_\_\_\_\_

I c. Will that course count toward my requirements? No, it would be useless for that.

. . . .

I took the course, but it was completely useless.

. . . .

(These cases interest me. Do we always mean here that a course doesn't help us graduate? The second sentence seems to mean that we didn't learn anything; it still would count toward graduation.)

. . . .

/I take it that in these last few cases the idea is that these things might be useful for some things, perhaps for their original purpose, but not for what we want to do, not for our purposes. That is a little different from the sense in the first and the second group of examples./

I d. Can I use a 2" x 8" plank to hold up that end of the table? I guess so, but don't you have a 2" x 2" that will do the job?

/This example seems to offer a fourth sense. Would we say that six inches of the 2" x 8" are useless? They are unnecessary, wasted. I guess also they could be used to do a job where that big a plank is needed, and a smaller one used for the table. We could also cut down the 2" x 8"./

. . .

I e. Take one of these marshmallows and prop open the door, will you?  
/This seems different again--a joke. The marshmallow is totally useless for the job. The marshmallow is 'useful' in cooking but not for the boss's purpose. Here the order's madness gives us the immediate perception that the marshmallow is useful-not-for-our-purpose; in groups II and III, the uselessness of the course, store, or motor was something which we had to discover./

. . .

I f. The doctor said his legs would be useless. But today he is the fastest miler alive.

/I guess here that the doctor may have meant that the legs could not be used for any purpose. Or perhaps he just meant "they won't hold you; they'll be useless; you'll have to have braces on them."/

. . .

I g. A tire pump is really useless these days. I always use the gas-station air hose.

/Useless becomes seldom needed./

. . .

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I h. Sonny, toy money is useless for buying groceries in a real grocery store.

/Useless here because by definition, in this case federal definition; we can't use toy money to buy groceries; what goes with the sense of the term 'toy money' is that we can't buy groceries with it.

\_\_\_\_\_ . . . \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase II: Analogies

I guess there is quite a range of contexts in which the word "useless" may be properly used, and in each of them different criteria for its use apply; that is, the word has a family of meanings (see Words and their Meaning, Grade 8). My idea is not to try to try out all of the contexts in which the different uses might come into play now. They have at least got me thinking about the extent to which the use of the word useless with respect to capital punishment is like its use in other contexts. How is capital punishment useless? I want to develop pictures of other contexts in which the word "useless" might be used; and I want to look at other phrases which work like the phrase "capital punishment is one of the most useless ways of obtaining justice." Then I may get clear about what seems curious about this usage in this context. The uses I come up with may not seem to have any connection with the examples above; but since it was these examples that suggested them, it may be that with a little effort you can see how each context for a use is suggested by one of the examples of the use of the word.

\_\_\_\_\_ . . . \_\_\_\_\_

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2. a /Useless for our purpose?: A context: /

What comes to mind now is this: the expression "capital punishment is a useless way to obtain justice" is like the expression "a rock crusher is a useless tool--if one wants to get a peanut out of its shell." Is that the kind of analogous situation which guides the author's use of "useless" here? What is working a rock crusher like? You raise the crusher a hundred feet or so and let it fall (at least that is how I've seen them work). Wham! It hits the shell. Where is the nut? Getting a nut out of its shell this way is impossible. Is this how capital punishment is useless? Justice requires a little shock like an electric fence--not the big bang.

2. b /Useless but it could still be used? A context for this 'sense' /

Suppose the crusher was gauged so that it stopped at short intervals--say 1/10" intervals. Now I guess one could crack the shell with it and eat the nut. Why not do that? What if we didn't have a nut cracker or couldn't use our fingers? Then a rock crusher changed for 1/10" intervals would be useful. Is this the way with capital punishment? If we changed it, altered it in some way, could we then obtain justice? Here the imported context seems clearly misleading. "Altering" is ruled out by the very character of capital punishment.

How would we alter capital punishment? When we use capital punishment, we kill a person, put him to death. Could we kill him just a little less? Can we kill him by degrees? But anything smaller wouldn't be capital punishment; we can't calibrate the "rock crusher" here. We either have killed the man or we

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haven't. If capital punishment is too big for the job that it's supposed to do, we must ask what is the job that capital punishment is supposed to do, and how would we know if capital punishment is "too big" for it?

2. c /Useless because a lot is "wasted"--too big/

In connection with the curious sound of "useless" in A's essay, I wanted to attend to the curious related idea that capital punishment is killing a person. We have spoken as if "killing a person" for justice is using too big tools or using more tool than is required (the 2" x 8"). But I'm not too sure about the use of the expression "killing a person" in connection with capital punishment. What strikes me is this: in connection with both the expression "killing a person" and the expression "capital punishment," we ordinarily use other expressions--expressions like "breaking the law" and "justice." These expressions go with or are related to the expression "killing a person" in ways different from those in which they are related to the expression "capital punishment." We say "killing a person" is "breaking the law"? If "killing a person" is "breaking the law" and "capital punishment" comes in after the law is broken, the criteria for the use of the two phrases are different.

Is this the analogy that leads our essayist?

(1) Killing a person is useless, a waste

(2) Killing a person in vengeance is a useless way of obtaining justice,  
it hurts the avenger;

(3) Capital punishment is a useless way of obtaining justice; the action is  
too harsh and hurts all of us;

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Equating "killing" and "capital punishment" is misleading. My essayist has forgotten the different criteria for applying the words "killing" and "capital punishment." Is that why he thinks of capital punishment as useless--thinking 'killing' is breaking the law and breaking the law to enforce the law is using too destructive a weapon, too big a tool, to force compliance?

\_\_\_\_\_ . . . \_\_\_\_\_

2.d /Useless because seldom needed/

I think I'll try another analogy now. Is using capital punishment to obtain justice like using a step ladder to get a can of soup off the seldom-used top shelf? That is, is this how the author of this essay looks at it? Another essay could say that capital punishment is the last step toward obtaining justice, but, perhaps the last step is seldom needed. Why? With a ladder there may be several reasons; the job doesn't call for going up that high, the ceiling is too low, one is afraid to go that high. But what of the use of capital punishment? Does something prevent us from using it or using it efficiently? Is there just a little call for it; people seldom do anything, such as commit murder, that calls for it? Are we afraid to go that far? None of these seem to work. There are plenty of occasions for it, plenty of people willing to use it. So if capital punishment is seldom used, the lack of use is not like the lack of use of the top step of the ladder.

2. e /Useless because of the sense of the expressions "capital punishment" and "Justice."/

Another analogy may help. Remember what we said about using paper

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money to buy groceries. Consider a similar phrase: "Using capital punishment is like using a needle and thread to rivet the Golden Gate Bridge together."

Would one do that? Do we use needles and thread to rivet? Maybe this is how the essay's author is looking at capital punishment and justice: needles and thread are used to sew--not to rivet; eyes see, they don't hear; flames burn, they don't dampen; capital punishment kills a person, it doesn't obtain justice. Is it like this--a matter of definition of the terms, a sense of the expression? Are they so defined as to exclude each other?

But that would mean that the author of the essay equates "capital punishment" and "killing a person." I think this is misleading. Of course if asked, "What does capital punishment mean?" We might answer, "to kill a person." But still, even though the two expressions can be used interchangeably, they don't seem to mean the same thing.

NOTES ON ESSAY A's: "A Parole Board can, etc . . . ."

I'm going to go to the second paragraph and work with the sentence: "A parole board can judge accurately the amount a man has reformed." The first sentence of the essay seemed to present a major theme which had to do with the uselessness of capital punishment; hence, I wanted to work with the expression "useless." But when I first read the sentence, it didn't sound curious to me. After I could hear it alongside the other sentences I brought to mind, it did sound curious. The sentence I'm going to work on now sounded strange when I first read it. That's why I'm going to work with it. Maybe it just sounds that way--maybe it is strange. At any rate, I want to find out. This time I'm starting with

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Phase II.

Phase II: Analogies to the expression: "A parole board can judge accurately."

The sentence "A parole board can judge accurately the amount a man has reformed" may be like the sentence "I can judge accurately the distance a man has broad jumped." That is, I would guess that the essayist's use of the phrase "A parole board can judge accurately the amount which a man has reformed," comes out this way by analogy with other contexts in which judging is judging amounts. What are the limitations of this analogy?

Suppose I tell a broad jumper that I can judge the distance he has jumped. I'll even tell him that I can judge accurately before using a tape. Now the jumper says, "O.K., I'll test you." (Which is also to say that judgment, in this sense, is something that can be put to the test.) So, he jumps, I say how far, and then we measure. We do this several times and I'm continually right until on the fifth or sixth jump I judge incorrectly.

Now, is a parole board's judging accurately the amount a man has reformed like my judging accurately the distance a man has jumped? (I'm trying you to get at the expression "I can judge accurately.") Is there something analogous to this measuring tape--something that determines whether or not the parole board has judged accurately the amount a man has reformed? Perhaps the measure here is how the man conducts himself once he is paroled.

I'm not sure that I'd be prone to say that parole boards judge. Maybe what they do might be seen simply as saying to the criminal "We trust you now." If that is the case, is there something like a measuring tape to decide whether

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or not they do trust him, or whether that trust is warranted? Is it now that he has won their confidence and can keep that confidence or lose it? What happens to him if he misbehaves on parole? So maybe again his conduct is the measure. But in that case what are we measuring? Whether or not the parole board trusted him or whether or not the trust was warranted?

These speculations suggest something that I suspected when I first read this sentence. There is something strange in talking about "amount of reform" as if this 'amount', like distances, could be judged, guessed at, and measured. The author at least seems to think that it can and to carry that thought to the end where he says "All this adds up to make capital punishment a very useless tool of justice." In what sense "adds up to"? Are the three expressions "amount of reform," "adds up to" and "useless tool of justice" part of a single misleading analogy suggested by applying the categories of "useful" and "useless" to efforts to see that justice is done--what our author calls 'obtaining justice.'

I now believe that I can construct a parable which in part mirrors my author's way of using words:

"Once upon a time Justice had a useless tool; this tool was a sort of measurer-shover which was supposed to see how much a man had gone bad and push him back just so much--73 inches--so that he would be good. When a bad man was shoved back to being good, he would know that he had received justice. Justice had other useful tools which did just this--shoved a man 73 inches back on the path. But Justice's tool always pushed people 24 inches too far. 18 inches on the other side of good was a cliff and this useless tool instead of pushing people 73 inches to good pushed them right over it and over the cliff and killed

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them. Then Justice said, "You add up to a very useless tool, for what I had in mind was pushing the man 73 inches not 97 and over the cliff and dead. A parole board can judge accurately the amount a man has been pushed back to good, but you just don't push the right amount and you change the whole game. People go over the cliff. You're useless."

I'm going to close my section of this by mentioning another sentence one might work with: "Does it deter would-be murderers"?

Phase II: Analogies to the expression: "Does it deter would-be murderers?"

What about this sentence: "The weather deterred them from going on a picnic." It sounds as if the author thinks that one defense for capital punishment is that it is like weather which absolutely keeps someone from doing what he wanted to do. I guess we might also say ". . . stopped them. . . ." And he wants to say, "It doesn't stop them." But does deter mean this when put by the defense? Suppose you are telling a story about planning a picnic. You've told all about the preparations and you say, "And guess what happened? It rained, so I couldn't go on a picnic." "It's raining, so now I can't go on a picnic." And now compare the sentence, "It rained; so I can't go on a picnic," with the sentence, "Graviola suffered capital punishment; I can't kill anyone," or "Graviola is suffering capital punishment; so now I can't kill anyone." Do they compare? The last one sounds strange to me. At least in the one case, deterring is something like "stopping," in the other, it is something like "putting the fear of God in me," "making me fear the consequences." In the case of going on a picnic in the rain, the rain is the certain misery which will come

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on me if I go outside, and it makes it impossible for me to picnic. Graviola's suffering is not the certain misery which will come on me if I kill somebody; it is a model of what may happen to me if I kill someone and am caught. It will not make it impossible for me to kill. It was not intended to. It was intended to make me fear the consequences of similar evil. At least now I'm not sure that expecting capital punishment to deter would-be murderers in any absolute way is based on a good analogy; that doesn't mean it may not be the one the author is using or thinks the defense is using; but if he is and it is not a good analogy, you can see that he--or the defense--are saying something that doesn't make sense.

"Would knowing that to do such a thing is evil deter you; is capital punishment like the 'Scarlet Letter'?"

There is a great deal more of the essay left to deal with. You go on and make use, analogy, point notes for expression in the rest of Essay A.

### Phase III: The Point

Perhaps now you can see how reminding yourself of the general uses of an expression may help you to understand the author's peculiar use, how it may help one be clear about the analogous contexts in which phrases like the author's might be used or analogous phrases which might be used in contexts which are the same or similar to the author's and which govern an author's use of an expression. Working with these uses, analogous contexts and phrases may help to grasp whether the author is making sense or is confused--misled by his own analogies. The speaker in the introduction was led to think that his audience didn't want to be prepared by thinking of "preparing" as we use it in the case of

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war as like Boy Scout "preparing"; he didn't perceive that he had hold of the wrong analogous context in which the word might be used and had applied its wrong leadings to the new situation. He failed to perceive that his use of "prepare" depended on a bad analogy. You still need to sharpen your art--working out which analogous contexts are good, which bad, how far any of them go before they break down, before they cease to be analogous; you need to judge whether the author is aware of their limits or whether he has ignored them.

#### THE END OF AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

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You may see now another of our reasons for saying that this kind of study of the meaning of an essay is an art. We've both worked all this time and still have no conclusion, no definite answer. But that's the point of it all . . . we're not trying to debate a point and make arguments for one side or another. We're trying to understand what's being said. I've been helped by doing the work here to get clearer about the essay and what it says. Some of it now seems sensible; some of it doesn't seem to make sense at all (and this has nothing at all to do with agreeing or disagreeing with the author, proving him right or wrong). Some things which sounded curious now appear to me as only sounding that way; that is, they make sense. You might like to go back and read what you've written (and maybe reread what I've written) and then go back to read the essay again, and see if it isn't clear to you where the essay is confused. You should, I suspect, have gone back to the essay for reference several times by now. I had to refer to it all along the way, and you will find that even though this seems bothersome at the time, it is a good practice to get into and helps in the long run.



I hope now you see that the words I have worked with and probably those you are working with are really simple, everyday words: deter, judge, useless, etc. And that's, of course, the danger. They are so common that we tend to read right over them as if the sentence was well greased, and we slipped right past. We just read on, never noticing that these familiar words may not have their familiar sense, in this essay. Later when you can tell immediately when a familiar word has a strange, or possibly no sense in a particular work, it will be easier. But for now at least you won't get hung up on these words. And you can see how the author, if he slides right past them too, can become confused, and be led, just as the reader may be, to think that because the words are familiar he is on safe ground, never realizing that the sense isn't the familiar sense; and thus he--and you--may be led to self-bewilderment by your own (his own) language. In this case, as I suspect in most, self-bewilderment is not bliss; and you as a reader or a writer had best not try to race on an oiled track. (Maybe too, this will suggest to you how writing, as in writing these notes, helps you to read by helping you get clear on a word's usage; and how reading, as in reading literature, helps you to write by helping you come up with analogies and familiar, ordinary uses.)

Perhaps now, with a little less description, explanation, advice, warning, etc., we can go on (if you are done here) to some other work, and you can get on a little slower on your own steam.

Part I

## B. Exercises: Phase III.

## CONTRARIES:

Refresh your minds as to the style, tone, and size of the essay on capital punishment. Now write an essay comparable to it in these respects in which you take the opposite opinion. You need not be concerned here with your own opinions on the matter. What you are trying to get at here are the author's comments. What is it that he is objecting to? Find that and work your essay around it. Bear in mind that what we are trying to do is to understand the author, to find his point.

The way I am going to go at it is to take each sentence as it comes and, once I find the opposite view of the first sentence, see if I can't carry that throughout as I deal with each succeeding sentence.

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 THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

1. Capital Punishment is one of the most useless ways of obtaining justice there is.

I imagine that a lot hangs here on what sense "useless" has. It may of course be conveying the idea that capital punishment never obtains justice. But it may also mean that sometimes it does obtain justice but not very often. I think that the author vacillates between these two implications. And I want to note one more thing here. The author says that it is "one of the most useless ways. . . ." Evidently there are other "useless ways" of obtaining justice besides capital punishment. With these points in mind I think that I will make my version read:

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Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is.

2. Why do we have capital punishment?

What is the point of this question? The author who goes on to answer this question does not picture himself as a person who has just heard about capital punishment, and, filled with curiosity, wants to know more about its whys and wherefores. He talks as if he is well-informed on capital punishment. So he doesn't ask this question out of curiosity. So, why does he ask it? Maybe it is helpful to imagine how the question would sound if it were asked aloud. Pretty obviously, this is a rhetorical question.

The next question he asks leads me to think that the author doesn't want a historical account of why we have capital punishment--where it was first used, who used it, when we adopted it, etc., (the kind of thing which we consider in the tenth grade unit on gathering evidence).

The point of this question seems to be to call into question the effectiveness of capital punishment: "What does capital punishment accomplish?" Is that the same question? I don't think then that I will have to change this question. What I will have to change is the sort of answer I give. And I think I'll put it in my essay in the reworded version. The sense is the same and seems to come out more clearly than in the original sentences. So now I have: Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice. What does capital punishment accomplish?

3. Vengeance of society on the criminal?

Is this really a question? It has the form of one; but, if it is a question, what's

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being asked? I can't come up with anything here; nothing seems to be asked at all. So I take it this is an answer to what was asked in the second sentence. And I am supposing that the reason it is in the form of a question is that it is supposedly my answer--it is as if the author said, "What is the purpose of capital punishment?" and I said "Vengeance!" The author hears me say this and repeats it--"Vengeance?" Again I think I can leave this sentence as it is, taking care later to use it differently. But I may change one point. It strikes me as strange to use the expression "Vengeance of society." The vengeance is on the part of the injured party, an individual. And I guess it is accomplished through legal channels set up by society, but it is not society's vengeance. And I think, too, that the same thing could be cleared up if I, keeping to the topic of the essay, said "justice" instead of vengeance. So I now have;

Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice (vengeance) from society on the criminal?

#### 4. Hardly!

I'm not going to do too much work with this right now; not because I don't think it's important, but because I don't think I can get at it until I get at what follows. "Hardly" could have several senses here: 'obviously not' as in the sentence "A gasoline engine can hardly run on water"; 'not very well' ('it doesn't do a very good job') as in the sentence "that six year old can hardly skate." So there are problems here--problems of ambiguity. But I think I can say this much: 'Hardly' is meant to be some sort of denial of what's been said. Look at this

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Look at this closely: if it's a denial, then can what was said before in question form really be a question? We deny answers, not questions. What we need is an affirmation, and I think I'll use "certainly."

Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on the criminal? Certainly!

5. Fast, painless death is hardly an excuse for punishment.

This seems to me to be where the real difficulties begin. What is the author saying here? Is it this: That we know that the death is fast and painless doesn't give us any excuse for punishing a man in this manner--it is still capital punishment, we still put a man to death, and that is too harsh. That may be it. The author has been trying to tell us that capital punishment is wrong. But maybe that isn't it at all. Maybe it's like this. We used to really torture people, and that was some punishment. But now with the capital punishment they don't really suffer--just "Switch, switch." and you're dead. What we do now could hardly be called punishment at all. At least it's a pretty poor excuse for it.

I'm thinking of two sentences now.

A. That your sister is barely sick is no excuse for overlooking sickness.

(I take it that is the sense in the first suggestion above.)

B. Your sister's trivial pains are a poor excuse for real sickness.

(I take it that's the sense in the second suggestion above.)

A. The quickness and painlessness of the death are hardly an excuse for giving something so undue as death.

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B. The quickness and painlessness of the death make it hardly a real punishment--a poor excuse.

I can't quite decide which suggestion to follow. The ambiguity I noted in the first sentence comes out here again. (If he meant that capital punishment didn't obtain justice at all, then I guess the first suggestion here is the best. But if he meant that it could but doesn't, or if he meant that it could if we altered it by making it harsher, then I guess the second suggestion might come in). The stickler is the word "hardly." If I take my "A" suggestion and the sentence that went with it, I can see how "hardly" works. "Fast, painless death is hardly an excuse for (such) a punishment as death." The other reading is more difficult. Would I ever say "You're hardly an excuse for a student"? I guess I might: "You're hardly even an excuse for a student--let alone a student"; "That's hardly even an excuse for a punishment--let alone punishment." It may help me to get in mind some situations in which I might say "hardly" and some when I wouldn't it.

Until I am clearer about what my author is following up (the B suggestions I will make my essay read, "Death per se is certainly not undue punishment (like torture)." I have now:

Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment.

6. To reform the criminal?

This seems like the previous "question" on vengeance; since there are

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several of these I've come to think that they are rhetorical--that is, no questions are being asked. The question form is just a matter of style. I thought earlier that our author was taking various answers given by others and repeating them. Now I don't think that is right. No one would think that is right. No one would think that reform comes in here at all. So I guess the author is ridiculing capital punishment as being totally alien to the concept of reform. Again we can leave the question intact but handle it differently.

Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society upon the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment. To reform the criminal?

7. Impossible:

How are we to understand the "impossible"? Normally in connection with reform we talk of a change of heart on the part of the criminal. He may now return to society, hold a job, take on responsibilities. That is, we all understand what it is for a man to reform. But, what is the force of the word "impossible" here? It isn't that the author has looked at a number of cases and found a lack of reform. The author makes it sound as if he is refuting something, as if he is telling us something we may not know. No one would seriously entertain the idea that capital punishment reforms the criminal; yet, the author sets that up as our answer and then seriously refutes it. But he isn't refuting anything. All he is really doing is reminding us of how the word 'reform' is used. So if the force of what the author says gives the appearance that a view

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has been asserted which he now refutes, we must show that nothing was ever asserted at all so there was nothing to refute. My sentence will read: Of course not, it never was intended to.

"Capital punishment is one of the most effective ways of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment. To reform the criminal? Of course, not, it never was intended to.

8. Does it deter would-be murderers? What are perfect crimes made for? Capture?

I take it that it is fairly obvious that the author is, in a word, saying "No." No, it doesn't deter would-be murderers. The difficulty here is to explain why the author says "no." What is the connection between the question about perfect crimes and the idea of deterring murderers? Suppose I said that capital punishment does deter would-be murderers. How could I explain that? Maybe this way: When a man plans to commit murder, he takes into consideration the consequences of his being caught. If there are no consequences, he is less inhibited in planning to commit the murder than if there are some consequences; and the more severe the consequences the more inhibited he will be in carrying out his plan. Thus, if the consequence is capital punishment and the would-be murderer asks, "What will happen after I kill him?," my answer is that he will be captured and put to death. The author of the essay is indirectly thinking along different lines. The criminal for him thinks, "I'll plan this job so well that I won't get caught." Now, bearing this in mind, I'll make my version read, "Does it deter would-be murderers? Why do people hesitate to



commit murder? Because there are no consequences?"

The essay now reads:

Capital punishment is one of the most effective means of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment. To reform the criminal? Of course not; it never was intended to. Does it deter would-be murderers? Why do people hesitate to commit murders? Because there are no consequences?

The essay now reads:

Capital punishment is one of the most effective means of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment. To reform the criminal? Of course not; it never was intended to. Does it deter would-be murderers? Why do people hesitate to commit murders? Because there are no consequences?

9. Whereas a dead man can hardly be reformed . . .

It strikes me that there is a parallel here between this sentence and the first sentence of the essay. "Capital punishment is one of the most useless ways of obtaining justice there is." I take it that the sense of the first sentence is this: "Capital punishment cannot obtain justice." I am comparing that sentence with "dead men cannot be reformed." It is as if the author were saying "What is capital punishment but the killing of a man, and what is justice but the re-forming of a man?" We came to something of the same picture when we worked

with the phrase "A parole board can judge accurately." The sentence ". . . a dead man can hardly be reformed . . . ." is significant now that I realize that the author is thinking of justice as being obtained when men are reformed. It is obvious that the author is not saying anything sensible about what dead men can or cannot do. But, not quite so obviously, he is telling us about his concept of justice--a dead man cannot be the product of just actions. (In a like way: Does the highway running from Omaha to Lincoln get tired? And if you say "no, of course not," is that because you found out something for a fact or because you know how the word running is used in that sentence.?)

I take it that with regard to the clause, "Whereas a dead man can hardly be reformed," our first response may be, "Obviously." And that would be enough. But it doesn't help us get at what the author is really doing. In asking for the author's point in saying what he does, and in drawing out that point, I hope you realize that he is not telling us anything that he found out by observing a number of cases of capital punishment. He is giving us a definition of justice, his own definition, and then telling us what is consistent with that definition. I think the first three sentences of the second paragraph can best be understood if we see them as stating what makes sense in connection with the notion that whatever helps reform a man is something which helps obtain justice. So the author establishes an idea of justice from which it follows that capital punishment is useless in obtaining it. What I want is a sentence that will present an idea of justice from which it follows that capital punishment is a useful way of obtaining it. (I notice too that the author is being circular--justice is being obtained when men are being reformed; only a living man can be reformed; so

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only a prisoner, being alive, can be reeducated and returned to a normal life  
/reformed/ --so I want mine to be circular.)

If I had an idea of justice such as "justice is being obtained when we give or render a person what is his due," my sentence might read something like, "so a man who deserves capital punishment does not deserve to remain alive." Or, since the author only implies his view, I'll let my sentence read, "Whereas an unpunished criminal hardly receives his due, a punished one receives his due penalty."

10. A parole board can judge accurately the amount a man has reformed.

I don't see much trouble here. If the author starts out with the idea that justice-being-obtained is men-being-réformed, then this sentence seems to illustrate justice-being-carried-out. I could make the opposite point by merely saying that the parole board can't judge accurately. But that doesn't fit into my essay very well. Just as he shows justice-being-carried-out according to his idea of justice, so I want to show the same thing according to my idea of justice: I want to show that capital punishment is a useful way of obtaining justice. That is, I want to show, particularly with regard to capital punishment, a criminal receiving his due. So let me try this sentence. "Our judiciary system can judge accurately the due penalty for a criminal."

Whereas an unpunished criminal hardly received his due, a punished criminal can receive his due penalty. Our judiciary system can judge accurately the due penalty for a criminal.

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3. Although there are occasional escapes, alert police soon apprehend the escapee.

I think this simply follows in the line of thought the author carried out in paragraph two. He has been working out the implications of seeing justice-being obtained as reeducating and returning a prisoner to normal life and has been trying to give the situation or condition consistent with that. So having said that only those men will be returned to normal life whom the parole board sees as having reformed, he now says that, though some prisoners escape, thereby returning as unreformed men to society, police soon apprehend the criminal. In other words, he is trying to show the workability of his idea of justice. So that's what I must do. I have said that only those men whom the court decides deserve capital punishment will receive it. Now I want to say that, even if an innocent man is charged with a crime that merits capital punishment, our courts hold him innocent until proven guilty. So now:

Whereas an unpunished criminal can hardly receive his due, a punished criminal can receive his due penalty. Our judiciary system may judge accurately the due penalty for a criminal. Although an innocent man is occasionally charged with a crime, our courts maintain that a man is innocent until proven guilty. All this adds up to make capital punishment a very effective tool of justice.

My full "contrary" essay then goes:

Capital punishment is one of the most effective means of obtaining justice there is. What does capital punishment accomplish? Justice from society on

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the criminal? Certainly! Death per se is certainly not an undue punishment. To reform the criminal? Of course not; it never was intended to. Does it deter would-be murderers? Why do people hesitate to commit murders? Because there are no consequences?

Whereas an unpunished criminal can hardly receive his due, a punished one receives his due penalty. Our judiciary system may judge accurately the due penalty for a criminal. Although an innocent man is occasionally charged with a crime, our courts maintain that a man is innocent until proven guilty. All this adds up to make capital punishment a very effective tool of justice.

Part II: A and B Exercises: Phases I, II, and III:

Let us review briefly. We are trying to get clear about what an author's problem is in passages which use confused or 'strange' language, language which strikes us as--in meaning or 'logic,'--confusing, ambiguous, or ambivalent. We have suggested that if an author seems to be saying two things at once or to be saying one thing and meaning another; if he appears to be so confused as to be 'indecipherable'; or if he seems to be saying something clearly but in such a fashion as not to enable us to be sure what his meaning is, this author may have been misled by the language itself:

A. He may have been confused by the similarities between uses of words in some situations and ignored the differences in the circumstances necessary for their application in his situation. For instance, he may recall that "executing" and "killing" are both used to describe an action that "ends a life." He may then carry the similarity on and speak of "executing" as "killing" also in the sense of "taking a life without legal sanction," forgetting that if he is to regard executing as "killing" without sanction he has some explaining to do. He just can't lean on an ambiguity or equivocation to show that execution is wrong.

B. Our author may have been confused by the fact that the context in which a word or phrase may be applied is similar to his context in some respect. He may forget that the context is significantly different in some respects, sufficiently different so as not to allow the application of his word or as to allow it only in a strange way. He may then go on to speak as if the 'strange' application--or strings of strange applications--were the ordinary, as if he had proved something by shifting context and/or meanings on us. If a man puts an electric wire on another man deliberately, he kills him. But, if he does it as the hangman in the context of

prior actions of juries and courts and judges, he executes him. If I use the word "kill" to describe what the hangman does, I have to explain why I have ignored the part of the context in the hangman's act which does not allow for the application of the word "kill" in its ordinary sense: "Arrest the hangman, he killed a man."

Once I am clear about what kind of linguistic or contextual confusion has guided my author to his 'strange' words, I should be able to say that I think his point to be or what the possible points which he may be making are and what it would be like to say something opposite to or different from what he is saying.

Now, having done this review, look at the student's essay which follows. I have underlined the words which strike me as sounding strange, and double underlined those which struck me as particularly strange:

Phase I. Go through the uses of the underlined words trying to be clear about what led the author to his strange uses by exemplifying other ordinary and strange uses. Look at the connections among this author's strange words.

Phase II. Imagine contexts in which the ordinary uses would work and in which the use would sound strange. Which seem to mirror the contexts provided in this essay? How?

Phase III. Describe the point of what the author is saying by putting down its opposite.

Essay II. Do you say what you mean?

"I mean what I said, I said what I mean;" the meaning of a word is not true 100%.

Perhaps one of the most deceiving parts of the English language is meanings of words. Furthermore, meanings have not only changed recently but have changed

markedly since Eliz. bethean times. To clarify some of these cloudy meanings with modern terminology will show the differences in the development of language through the years.

As I said above, "I mean what I said, I said what I mean," does not hold true. For example, if a person said his troubles were behind him, you would suppose he meant that all of his troubles were in the past. In the same context, if a person said "the greatest is behind" you would suppose he meant a similiar meaning. However, Macbeth meant the greatest is yet to come. Consequently, you can perceive the changes which are part of the evolution. If a person said he would jump over time, you would theorize he meant that he would figuratively like to skip over time. Now, if in the same frame of reference, a man said "We'd jump the life to come," you would theorize that he meant he would figuratively like to skip the life to come. However, Macbeth means he will risk the life to come. Hence, we see another strange evolution of language with respect to word meanings. Likewise you would surmise that a man meant nothing would stick or apply to a situation when he said nothing would adhere; when Macbeth said "Nor time nor place / Did then adhere," he meant no time or place was appropriate. If Macbeth said "While, then, God be with you" you would deduce he meant "During that time, God be with them." But he meant, "Until then God be with them."

My deduction would be that the evolution of language has changed the meaning of words; although a word may be used from age to age in the same context, its meaning may vary according to the state of the language in that particular age. Consequently, I find meanings of words can change as different periods of time come and go and as accepted language forms come and go." Thus I would conclude "meanings of words are not true 100%."



Part III

Read the following essay: Essay B.

Part III: A EXERCISES: PHASE I

Write a series of notes in which you simply work with the words and sentences that seem strange in this essay. Perform for this essay the Phase I, II and III operations which were performed on the first and second essays. Do not look at my notes until you are well along with making your own.

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THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

A. Phase I: The use of the word "controversy":

I wish to start my work as I did before with the first sentence of the essay. I'm interested in what Horn has to say about "controversy"; that is, what I'd like to do is work out (look and see) what sorts of things we can say about a controversy.

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1. The uses of the word "controversy":

What is a controversy like? Is a controversy a fight? That seems to sound all right, but I'm not inclined to say that it helps me understand what is involved. Is a controversy a struggle? Not a struggle as we might struggle against a storm. If a driving snowstorm has come up we might struggle to get to the house, and finally make it. Yet I'm still not to call a controversy a struggle in this sense. But why not? In the storm I might struggle and succeed, succeed in getting to the house. Do you succeed in a controversy beyond succeeding in being controversial? No. In a controversy it seems that you pit your wits against the wits of another man . . . and what? May the best man win? It seems that I should be able to say that controversies are won or that one side succeeds, but these expressions do not seem to fit. Controversies are resolved. They end, they do not stop: "And that comment ended the controversy." Some controversies are never resolved; but hang in the air or are forgotten. Mr. Horn says that his remarks are "concerned with" a controversy. Is he above it and describing it? Or is he on one side? We need to know whether he is in the stadium or on the field.

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2. The uses of the word "dilemma":

When I said "Controversies are resolved," I recalled an expression which Horn uses in the last of his essay--"dilemma." Dilemmas are also "resolved."

Is Horn confusing the similar and differing uses of the two words?

Is this "controversy" a "dilemma" which can be "resolved"? He says:

The dilemma is this: how can the colleges and universities provide graduates prepared for the thousands of specialized tasks which must be carried on in our technological civilization and at the same time also prepare for the demanding responsibilities of intelligent and informed citizenship in our democratic society?

(para. 27)

Notice the "little words" the "sign posts," which appear in the essay: ". . . I believe . . . and am convinced," "my quarrel with. . . ." As I write these notes I feel that there is a conflict between his saying that a "dilemma" is present and his having to present views as his beliefs or his convictions. Beliefs suggests that he is on a side; dilemma suggests that there are two sides, just a lot of puzzled people looking at the horns. The dilemma Horn is speaking of is a public thing; it is one which apparently exists for everyone, and, if it is resolved, it could affect other people--if it is resolved, its solution should

be clear to those faced with a dilemma. But is anyone faced with a dilemma which Horn now resolves?

I think not. Horn says "It is in the liberal arts peoples' failure to present in proper perspective the major dilemma of higher education in our day that the liberal arts people are perhaps most guilty? (para. 27)." Horn appears to be accusing people of not seeing the dilemma clearly. But Horn introduced the dilemma; apparently no one saw it clearly before he wrote this essay. The sequence of events seems to come in this order: there was a controversy and Francis Horn saw it as containing a dilemma. He presents the dilemma and resolves it. In resolving the dilemma he also, apparently, abolishes the controversy, and once the controversy has been abolished, there is no more to be said. But is this a "dilemma" which nobody saw, or a real disagreement (Who goes to what kind of schools and what for: jobs, husbands, wives, A's, B's, facts) in which a great many people were involved and concerning which they struggled?

3. The connection of the use of the word "sniping" to the words "controversy" and "dilemma."

The controversy is clearly sometimes more than a "dilemma," more like a "fight"--a matter of two sides composed of great men sniping at each other.

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This is not particularly complimentary to those involved in the controversy but neither are many of Horn's earlier expressions complimentary to their intelligence--they are led about by "illusions," "misconceptions," "misrepresentations," and "misunderstandings." Perhaps they really are in a fight--they are not bewildered by a dilemma or involved in a controversy which can be resolved--and this fight is over nothing: fake flags--illusions, misconceptions, misrepresentations.

B. Phase I: Words related to "dilemma" and "controversy":

In seeing this essay as the presenting of a dilemma, some of those "little words" seem to stick out more markedly. These are the words which are easily passed over, but which are, I think, often the source of the difficulty. The words I now see are "is defined," "to define," "the term," "my concept." When we read in the third paragraph, "I hope to show that the current attacks on vocational education are based upon illusions or misconceptions concerning 'liberal education' that justify the word 'folklore,'" we can, I think, begin to see what the "illusion" is like upon which the criticisms are based. By defining and using words clearly, Horn hopes to bring out the illusion; for the illusion seems to be the result of using unclear concepts: " . . . based upon illusions or miscon-

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ceptions . . . " he says.

C. The use of the word "education": As I have approached this essay so far, Horn is presenting a dilemma as a matter of choosing your words or defining your terms. Now how does he choose words and define terms? Compare these two sentences: In his third paragraph, he says, "I shall use the term 'vocational education' in its broadest sense, denoting that education, regardless of its level, which pre-pares the student for a specific occupation." In paragraph 27, he presents the dilemma in these terms: "How can the colleges and universities provide graduates prepared for the thousands of specialized tasks which must be carried on in our technological civilization and at the same time also prepare for the demanding responsibilities of intelligent and informed citizenship in our democratic society?" I hope that your eye is already caught up with the repetition of the expression "prepare"; if it is, you are on the way to handling this essay. It seems to me now that the key to following Horn's line of thought is being able to follow the progression of his use of "prepares for." When he first says he will use "vocational education" in the sense of education "which prepares the student for a specific vocation," it seems to me that the hint is already there that he is thinking of all education as preparing for, a preparing for something else. As

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we finish out assignment A, two questions seem of prime importance: "In what sense does education--all education--'prepare for'?" and "Is Horn forced, by his own definition, to explain every type of education as a 'preparing for' something, and does such an explanation always make sense?" In what sense does education "prepare"? I want to start again by getting in mind the sort of thing we say about "preparing."

D. Phase I: "Educating my child" = "preparing"?\*

a. In what sense "prepares for"? Parents prepare their children for the hardships in life? Do they prepare them for the joys of life? How would they do that? "Teach them how to enjoy life"?

b. "Preparing" is like:

Farmers prepare the earth for planting. They plow it, disc it, fertilize it, and then . . . then they plant it. Is education like planting? Do you know what will grow by watching what you plant? People prepare for dinner parties. They clean the house, cook the meal, get themselves ready, set the table, and greet the guests. Is there in education some culmination or point like the greeting of the guests when what is not done, like straightening the

\* Recall our discussion of preparing in the introduction to this unit.

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curtains, goes undone?

"Be prepared!" That's the Boy Scout's motto. And now it seems that we can ask "prepared for what?" "Suppose a snake bit you, what would you do?" "What if you were walking down the street and noticed a blind man standing on the corner, waiting for the cars to pass so that he might cross the street?" "What if you were riding in the car with your father and you came upon a bad accident? What should you do?" "If only I had had a proper education!"

Prepare a package for mailing.

c. "Preparing for responsibility" is like what? "prepared for the demanding responsibilities of intelligent and informed citizenship."

Suppose your father died, and it was your responsibility to tell your mother. How would you prepare yourself for that responsibility? Do preparations come in connection with responsibility? Prepare young men for war.

Is he prepared? Suppose I want to take a friend of yours on an expedition to the top of Mt. Everest, and the responsibility to prepare him for the trip falls upon your shoulders. You must train him to climb mountains, handle ropes and picks; you must teach him how to keep warm in sub-zero weather, how to build a fire in the snow. You must train his eye to detect weak spots in

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the snow, or weak spots in the rocks where a piton is to be driven. I've assumed that you know all these things. You could, I suppose, know all these things and not be prepared to undertake the responsibility of teaching someone else; perhaps I caught you unaware when I gave you this responsibility. After a month I may ask "Is he ready?" "Yes, he has learned everything I have to teach him."

I might now test your friend. "Is he prepared for all eventualities?" I think to myself. Then I ask him, "Suppose you and I were scaling up the same cliff, and I was above you and tied to you with about twenty-five feet of rope; and suppose I slipped and fell. What would you do?" In such cases there are certain ways of handling the rope which binds the two together. and even if the friend gives a good answer, that does not mean that at the time of crisis he will succeed in doing what he said he would.

And suppose I know the role that fear can play in a man's ability to scale a peak, so I ask, "Are you prepared to die?" Does one prepare himself? Perhaps this question comes to "Are you willing to die?" or "Will you be afraid when there is 500 feet of air between you and the jagged rocks below?" or "Are you alert?"

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To be prepared to die in this case is not like preparing the body for burial or preparing the body for climbing mountains.

We are, at times, not prepared for what is going to happen, but it happens anyway and we manage to live through it--a flat tire, a date who gets sick, a prize won at a drawing, a pop quiz. "Prepared for responsibility?"

Students prepare for tests. They try to learn things that might be asked for on the tests. "Prepared for the responsibility of citizenship"?

The President of a company prepares a financial report for the employees and says then, "Prepare yourself for a shock." Is that education--? Preparing it is.

When a carpenter's apprentice goofs up a door, does the master prepare him for fixing a door properly? "Prepared for responsibility"?

"You should have known better than to put the latch on the door before you hung it."

"Well, I do now."

The master carpenter teaches him to fix a door properly, but "prepares him" sounds odd. And who did the work on responsibility?

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E. Phase II: Contexts in which "teaching" as "preparing for" makes sense:

Francis H. Horn seems to think that a teacher prepares his student for something; I will not ask, at this point, "for what is he being prepared?" Rather my question is, what is it that the teacher does with the student that is now spoken of as "preparing him for. . . ." Much involved in Horn's perspective seems to be this: he defines "teaching" in terms of "preparing for," so that whenever a teacher teaches a student something he is preparing that student for something.

Defining "teaching" in terms of "preparing for," can be seen as a type of explaining what the word "teaching" means. In some cases of teaching such an explanation makes sense. Why do schools have fire drills? The teacher teaches her pupils what to do in the case of fire. The pupils are prepared for an emergency; they know what to do when that bell rings. Sometimes it is hard to tell whether or not there is a real fire. The pupils are so well prepared that when the fire bell rings they file out of the building without any disorder. What a surprise one day to file out of the building as you have always done only to turn around and see the building going up in flames. And so it is in this case; as one is being taught something, he is being prepared for something else. And it seems particularly significant to me to emphasize in this case that, while the

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teaching (preparing for) is going on, everyone knows what it is they are being prepared for--the event of a real fire.

F. Phase II: Contexts: The limitations of "teaching is a preparing for"?

But is all teaching a preparing for? Is all education a preparing for something? What about mathematics? Suppose you are taught that 2 and 2 is 4. And suppose you learn it. What are you prepared for? Are you prepared to add 2 and 2 and get 4? But that is what you learned? Being able to add may be seen as part of the preparation needed to build a bridge, but when the teacher taught you to add, was she preparing you for the building of a bridge? Maybe she was preparing you for the task of dividing jelly beans between friends. Learning how to add may be useful in a great number of things but what seems to be lacking in a great many cases of teaching is a knowledge of what it is you are being prepared for. Imagine someone who said, "It has often been a source of confusion for me that, after I tell people what I am preparing to be, I then look at what I am studying and ask, 'How does that prepare me for being a...?'" Perhaps not all teaching is a preparing for something; when you look at some things you are being taught and try to find out what it is you are being prepared for, you

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are left in a quandry. But not all teaching is a preparing for something; perhaps many things you are now learning, or are now being taught, have no definite purpose in sight--Did you say, "I'm going to build a bridge ten years from now and I'll need to know this?"

Why study?"

"Then, why study?"--But wait a minute! That very question, or excuse, is again looking at all studying as preparing for something.

G. Phase II: Horn on the contexts in which the phrase "liberal education" was used in the text:

What is it that Horn is calling "vocational education?" Horn seems to wish to say that what we call "vocational education" now would have been called "liberal education" in the past and that what is now called "liberal education" never did exist. Is this the case?

From Horn's remarks one would gather that some people who are involved in the controversy are saying things like "Don't just teach a man how to build a bridge; teach him when Napoleon lived, how a seed grows, what Thoreau meant when he said...." And why should we teach him these things? Because, as President Griswold of Yale might say, "These have been esteemed for 2,000 years as the key

to the good life as well as to all true academic achievement" (para. 10).

But Horn's contention with Griswold is that these studies have not been fixed for two thousand years; we have not always studied Napoleon, seeds and Thoreau. We have studied how to build bridges or studies like these. We could get the facts in this case; the procedures which we have used in the tenth grade unit on induction would help. Probably at this point in the essay, we need to know the facts about the history of education--not to quarrel about words.

But still there is the problem about words: can what was done in the schools of the past be called a "preparing for" like "preparing a man to build a bridge;" was what was called "liberal study" in the past like "preparing a man to build a bridge"--i.e. vocational education? But did Griswold deny this? What did he deny? And what did Horn assert? Or, better, in what sense has education always been a preparing for in the same sense that vocational education is a preparing for? To clarify the "misunderstanding" of the history of higher education, Horn gives a brief history of it (paragraphs 12-17). This history has two points. One is, as I have said, to show that President Griswold was wrong, at least wrong about the 2,000 years. The other is to confirm Coffman's remark that "The 'liberal' studies of each age have been the practical studies of that age." Horn's short

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history of higher education shows, then, that education has always been practical or vocational in aim. What most people have been calling liberal education turns out really to be vocational education. Or perhaps I could put it this way. Education has always been practical; it has always been preparing someone for something.

H. Phase I again: Use of the words "liberal education" and "vocational education": "liberal"="vocational"

What has Horn done? It seems to me he has done this: What was called "liberal education" is shown to be "vocational education"--"vocational education" in its broadest sense "denoting that education, ~~regardless~~ of its level, which prepares the student for a specific occupation" (para. 3). The only education not included in this sense seems to be Aristotle's "education suitable for the leisure class" (para. 13); and it seems easy to question whether what a man does in his leisure time can be said to grow out of a "vocational education." But all other education--presumably education suitable for a working man--does something to a working man, affects how he works, and so demands that it be called a "vocational education." What has Horn done? With a broad sweep of the term "vocational education," he has given the term "liberal education" nothing to hang on to; it is

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only Aristotle's "education suitable for a leisure class"--a philosopher's fancy.

I. Phase I again: Horn's use of liberal and vocational again: "vocational"=  
"liberal."

Once we see the pattern in the essay, we can see more clearly what is being done when Horn says "my concept of liberal education should become clear as I proceed" (para. 2). His "concept" becomes clear in paragraph 25: "The fact is that no subject, of itself, is liberal. It is not what the student studies that gives him a liberal education, but how he studies it, and the way it is taught." I now put the concept into quotation marks because, as it seems to me, his concept of liberal education has not become clear through his using that expression, but through his definition of it--which is his own private definition. We might recall what we learned about the use of words, giving them private meanings, in the Eighth Grade unit on "Words and their Meanings." We have here then a recommendation concerning how we should use the expression "liberal education"--not concerning what should be done in schools and factories and so forth; we have a direction as to how to employ an expression which poses as a direction concerning what we should do.

The original controversy becomes a matter of word choice; that this is Horn's way of looking at it comes out in paragraphs 24 and 25 when he repeats the expres-

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sion "so-called." It is "so-called liberal education," "so-called liberal subjects," and "so-called vocational subjects." It is as if the liberal arts people and the vocational education people have had the wrong names and have thus been "sniping at each other" (para. 32) with their misconceptions and misunderstandings. Is that how they got into "their dilemma"--the dilemma which Horn discovered them in and which they hadn't noticed? They used the wrong words. How does one use the right words?

J. Phase II: Contexts and Analogies: "Hawks are eagles, and eagles hawks"

Let us imagine that you and I were having a violent argument about whether it was a hawk or an eagle that was in the tree. Our argument, so far, has only taken the form of saying what markings the bird had; that is, we've not yet lost all our sense and started to hit each other (thereby showing who is stronger, not what was in the tree). I say it has white markings on the tail, and you say it does not. Horn comes along and says, "You two are obviously having a violent argument. Now just let me say a few things about birds: to begin with I'm going to use "hawks" to mean anything that flies, how I use "eagle" will become clear later. You'll both agree that whatever was in the tree flies; you saw it fly

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away. So part of your argument is settled; it was a hawk. But you are also mistaken in arguing as if eagles could not be hawks--as if whatever it was had to be one or the other. But the fact is no flying thing is, of itself, an eagle. It is not what flies that is an eagle but how it flies; that is, it must soar. Thus a so-called hawk can be an eagle if it soars. If it does not soar, it is not an eagle.

There are a number of variations now, and you can work them out yourself; for example, all hawks could be eagles.

K. Phase II: Contexts in which Horn's usage might be tried --"nuts" and "bolts":

Let us look again at paragraph 25 and see how the usage which its definition describes would work in a particular context: "It is not what the student studies that gives him a liberal education, but how he studies it, and the way it is taught." According to this definition a man could have nothing but vocational education courses, and still get a liberal education. But how are we to understand this? Suppose a man is learning to be (preparing for being) an auto-parts man. He is taught about nuts and bolts, windshield wipers, fenders, seats, chrome, etc., etc. And when he has finished his training period it's possible to say, according to Horn's definition, "It is not what the student studies that

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gives him a liberal education, but how he studies it, and the way it is taught" (para. 22). And now, upon seeing the man sort nuts and bolts, are we supposed to be able to say, "My, but you have a fine liberal education! Where did you get it?" "From learning to be an auto-parts man." Apparently the matter should end here.

Suppose, however, that the auto-parts man does display a broad training. According to Horn, we are under the same illusions that the liberal arts people are under should we like to know how he received a liberal education from his limited training. We might ask "But how did you learn so many things from that course?" And I would expect such an answer as "Well, we didn't just talk auto parts. We talked about literature, religion, politics, just about anything that came to mind," not such an answer as "It was how I thought about fenders, nuts, and bolts; it was not that I thought about them but how I thought...."

L. Phase I: Uses: Dilemma or Controversy:

I am thinking that, in representing the gaining of a liberal education in this way, I have opposed Horn's concept of liberal education as put forth in paragraph 25. At least, I have said that he cannot use the phrase "liberal edu-

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cation" as he uses it and have it mean what it has meant when others, his "opponents," have used it. And so the controversy remains. Perhaps there wasn't a dilemma to be resolved but a real disagreement: "How much history for a garage mechanic?" And I also feel that I have given an example which would interest the people involved in the controversy. The controversy, it seems to me, might be represented in this type of question. "How many hours of history should we require?" Require of whom? Of the man who has come to an institution of education and said "I want an education."

"What do you want to learn to be?"

"An auto-parts man."

"Is that all?"

"Yep!"

"Then you'd better go down to the garage and learn there."

But wait! The controversy arises not because thousands of young men and women have some particular job they want, but because they want something more. But how are we to settle all this? It seems now that I am getting drawn tighter and tighter into the issue involved, and it started out being my main concern to see, not just what Horn discussed in this essay, but how he handled it.

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The original assignment in this section was to write a series of notes in which you work with uses of expressions used in the essay and with analogous contexts in which the expressions used in the essay might be used--contexts suggested by expressions used in the essay. I have done that in part, moving from Phase I to Phase II and back as the situation seemed to require, seeing the connections between our author's use of various words and between his use and contexts in which they might be used or abused. I have tried to call attention to a perspective from which you might be able to handle this essay by following up the sense of these related expressions:

(A). Controversy, dilemma, struggle, fight, sniping.

(B). "Dilemma" and definitions

(C). Key phrases:

1) education "prepares for"

2) "liberal education"

3) "vocational education"

I haven't dealt with all the possible sentences. But I do have a view of the essay now with which, by seeing where Horn thinks he is going, I could proceed to work with other sentences or words. It is necessary to get such a perspective

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first. Once you have it (or one of your own) finish assignment A and go on.

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Part II: B Exercises: Phase III

Write an essay comparable in tone and style (but not in length) to Horn's essay. Take a view opposite to that which Horn presents. Try to follow the line of thought and the style of reasoning that he uses, but do not try to match his quotations with some of your own.

Take a look at Horn's first paragraph. There he says that he is concerned with a certain controversy concerning liberal education. The result of his essay is to show that there is no controversy: that, being like all education, a liberal education is not what we thought it was; that we, assuming we have put ourselves in opposition to Horn, are sniping at each other. We have already looked at paragraphs two and three. In these paragraphs, Horn gives the definition "vocational education"--Horn has given the term "liberal education" nothing to hang on to. Near the end of this essay he gives us a place to hang "liberal education" (from the sense I can make of his concept, I think it hangs so as to hang itself).

Horn gives his definition of "liberal education" well after he shows us what is meant by "vocational education." If he had begun this essay with his definition of "liberal education," I think I would have sensed something wrong sooner. His definition is (from para. 25):

The fact is that no subject, of itself, is liberal. It is not what the student studies that gives him a liberal education, but how he studies it, and the way it is taught.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By the way--before going on I guess we should remind ourselves that no one but Horn means what he does by "vocational education." But the

The heart of this essay seems to be Horn's conception of education--education prepares someone for something. Working with this definition we can show all education to be vocational in nature. There is no set of studies that can be called liberal. So Horn defines what a liberal education is. If he had given this definition at the beginning, he would have had to make clear what he was talking about when he said that what makes an education "liberal" is how (you) study," as it stands, it looks as if "how" you study car engines or "how" you learn to pull teeth determines whether you get a liberal education. That needs explanation--do you study cars 'liberally,' do you study this unit "liberally?"

It would seem here that, in writing an opposing essay, the best place to start would be to oppose Horn's basic definition of education. And I think the best way to do that is to show that his talk about education involves using the word in a fashion far different from that of our ordinary usage of the word; he is playing Alice-in-Wonderland's "Humpty-Dumpty" (cf. Eighth Grade, "Words and Their Meanings"). Anybody could say anything if he could play Humpty-Dumpty's game. What we want is something that accounts for things as they are, not something which makes things over into our way of accounting for them.

But it won't do here just to deny Horn's definition. If we say education is not a preparation, then we will run into difficulties in those instances when, in preparing someone, we do teach him something. What I'm going to say is that ordinarily when we use the word education (He has a fine education; what sort of education do you get there? Are you interested in education?) we would say that "when we get an education, we learn things"; that is, generally getting an education is learning something and when you are learning things you are getting an whole history of higher education or any reference he makes to it can only mean "vocational education" once he defines this term the way he does. Horn is working around the concept "prepares for"; and once he can say that an education or a series of courses prepares someone for something, then he can, by definition, refer to all courses or education as "vocational." But now--to go on.

education. The task now will be to carry this concept of education throughout an essay.

#### Part IV:

Read the following essay:

##### Time for a Change

1. Are we, the American people, being short-changed? Are millions of our tax dollars being needlessly spent? Many well known authorities think so. Let us examine the facts and prove beyond a doubt that the United States foreign aid program must be drastically altered--and soon.
2. Can the underdeveloped regions of the world satisfactorily raise their living standards with only our cash and high-level technical advisors? No! As Hubert Humphrey states in the Peace Corps Guidebook, "We must offer to the peoples of those lands desperately needed operational skills and the training to allow those skills to endure and multiply among local citizens." We've gotten to the point where we try to let the American dollar do everything in the world. The world has got to help itself! It takes more than money to really ease the suffering and raise the people in these undeveloped areas. In order to develop their country these people need an offer of friendship from men and women willing to share their burdens in order that they may learn and progress.
3. Our foreign aid program, as it is now, is doing very little good. To a great extent the aid money isn't helping the people in the underdeveloped countries. Only a few power-seeking individuals ever see the money--and they don't pass it on to the people, where it will do the most good. Government-owned industries drive out private enterprises, and thus hinder the economy even more than before.
4. Although it is recognized that foreign aid is essential to national security



and necessary in some form, we should realize our human limitations and accept the fact that underdeveloped areas cannot change overnight. The Clay Committee on foreign aid reports: "There is a feeling that we are trying to do too much for too many too soon, that we are overextended in resources and undercompensated in results, and that no end of foreign aid is either in sight or mind.... While as are concerned with the total cost of aid, we are concerned even more with whether its volume is justified and whether we and the countries receiving it are getting our money's worth. We cannot believe that our national interest is served by indefinitely continuing commitments at the present rate."

5. We seek a world in which mankind is relieved of the ancient enemies of freedom and loyal allies of totalitarianism--poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy. The purpose of our aid program should be keyed to helping men and women help themselves to security, to progress, and to individual dignity. Our people must approach people of other lands as equals, as partners, as fellow human beings willing to share the skills and work needed to build a better life for all. Young people today can do what no other American has done. They can put themselves on the level of the real people of the country. This can be a great service for no one is more loved than the man who works shoulder to shoulder with you.

6. Foreign aid can do so much good, for the United States and its ideals and the countries needing our guidance, if only we use the right methods to give our assistance. The government, with the Peace Corps, can do work never before imagined with its human level approach. Private, government-approved agencies, such as Care and Medico can add a great deal by contributing much-needed materials and medical aid. Therefore, it is obvious that our money could be better spent in training volunteers and providing tools and medical and school supplies to be used by the workers and teachers overseas.

7. One authority in support of these beliefs is Representative Passman, who has studied our foreign aid program and traveled extensively. He is completely disgusted with our present policies. He feels that we have substituted aid for trade and appeasement for a firm and fair foreign policy. He also believes that people all over the world are taking advantage of us. Naturally, it is clear that this situation must be stopped immediately. In his travels, Mr. Passman also found that the masses in many countries don't know anything about American aid and that the aid money isn't doing the country any good.
8. A study of Latin American aid made by U. S. Senator John C. Tower draws similar conclusions. Although the United States is pouring money into the Latin American countries, they are slipping further behind economically. We are financing government-owned industries which are driving out private enterprises. Senator Tower recommends refusal of aid to countries engaged in undermining the free enterprise system. He also suggests that we insist that countries seeking aid mobilize their own citizen's resources before U. S. citizens spend their money. He favors active discouragement of inflation and thinks we should do all we can to promote a political climate favorable to the investment of private capital in productive enterprises.
9. Further, the Clay Committee Report on foreign aid wants the U. S. to make colder economic judgments of what countries need help and whether they are taking steps to help themselves. In its study the committee found too many purely political commitments, too many projects that started as "gifts to prove our esteem for foreign heads of state, hastily devised projects to prevent Soviet aid, gambles to maintain existing governments in power, and projects to gain leverage for political support." For every praiseworthy example in favor of foreign aid, they found another where U. S. money seems to be going down the drain.
10. Since these reports clearly show that our present aid program is questionable, we need to know how the situation can best be remedied. The logical con-

clusion drawn from the evidence presented must be that our aid program should be centered around volunteer workers rather than money. The best existing organization for the promotion of this type of aid is the Peace Corps. Hubert Humphrey puts great faith in this association. He believes that understanding of the project would lead all Americans to give it their complete support. In his foreward to the Peace Corps Guidebook, he has this to say about the Peace Corps and its goal--which should be the goal of all aid:

11. The American people must seek to understand both the opportunities and the problems of the Peace Corps. They must be prepared for some mistakes and even some failures. More important, they must have the vision to see its magnificent potential.

12. The real power of the United States is in the people, in the compassion of individual Americans for others and in the capacity of their skills and their dedication to help others.

13. The sooner we put that power to work in the world's zone of misery, the sooner peace will be secured.

14. That is the purpose of the Peace Corps. "That is the goal of America. That is the hope of man."

#### Part IV. A.

Write a series of Phase I and Phase II notes on this essay by Fitz Pamwater.

#### Part IV. B. Exercises

Reread Fitz Pamwater's essay; you are now to write an essay comparable to this essay in size, tone, and style, but write your essay from the opposite point of view. In trying to write an essay from the opposite point of view, I would suggest that you first formulate a statement of the direction of Fitz Pamwater's

essay. Why is the author writing it? "Because the teacher said so" is not a sufficient explanation. What job does he think this essay will perform? There are, perhaps, three or four related phrases which may give you a perspective for working with this essay:

"Let us examine the facts and prove beyond a doubt...." (para. 1)

"Therefore, it is obvious...." (para. 6)

"Naturally, it is clear...." (para. 7)

"Since these reports clearly show that our present aid program is questionable, we need to know how the situation can best be remedied. The logical conclusion drawn from the evidence presented must be...."

These give the essay the appearance of an argument. In writing your essay you must take careful notice of the kinds of "facts" and "evidence" that are presented and how "the logical conclusion" is drawn from these.

Your essay need not be quite so long but its length should give a similar effect.

#### Part V:

Read the following excerpt from the works of Frederich Nietzsche. It is what we call an aphorism, which is simply a short, concise statement of principle. The aphorism will become clear, I think, after you have read and found the principle behind "the means to real peace":

The means to real peace. No government admits any more that it keeps an army to satisfy occasionally the desire for conquest. Rather the army is supposed to serve for defense, and one invokes the morality that approves of self-defense. But this implies one's own morality and the neighbor's immorality; for the neighbor must by thought of



as eager to attack and conquer if our state must think of means of self-defense. Moreover, the reasons we give for requiring an army imply that our neighbor, who denies the desire for conquest just as much as does our own state, and who, for his part, also keeps an army only for reasons of self-defense, is a hypocrite and a cunning criminal who would like nothing better than to overpower a harmless and awkward victim without any fight. Thus all states are now ranged against each other: This presupposition, however, is inhumane, as bad as war and worse. At bottom, indeed, it is itself the challenge and the cause of wars, because, as I have said, it attributes immorality to the neighbor and thus provokes a hostile disposition and act. We must abjure the doctrine of the army as a means of self-defense just as completely as the desire for conquests.

And perhaps the great day will come when a people distinguished by wars and victories and by the highest development of a military order and intelligence, and accustomed to make the heaviest sacrifices for these things, will exclaim of its own free will, "We break the sword," and will smash its entire military establishment down to its lowest foundations. Rendering oneself unarmed when one had been best-armed, out of a height of feeling--that is the means to real peace, which must always rest on a peace of mind; whereas the so-called armed peace, as it now exists in all countries, is the absence of peace of mind. One trusts neither oneself nor one's neighbor and, half from hatred, half from fear, does not lay down arms. Rather perish than hate and fear, and twice rather perish than make oneself hated and feared--this must someday become the highest maxim for every single commonwealth too.

Our liberal representatives, as is well known, lack the time for reflecting on the nature of man: else they would know that they work in vain when they work for a "gradual decrease of the military burden." Rather, only when this kind of need has become greatest will the kind of god be nearest who alone can help here. The tree of war-glory can only be destroyed all at once, by a stroke of lightning: but lightning, as indeed you know, comes from a cloud-- and from up high.

Part V:

Perform Phase I, II and III operations on Part V as suggested by your instructor.

Part V:

Read the following essay by Walter Lippmann.

The Indispensable opposition

Part VI: A Exercises:

Perform Phase I and Phase II operations on this essay or on some parts of it--as your teacher suggests.

Part VI: B Exercises: Phase III:

Write an essay in which you show how the opposition is dispensable. In your essay you should work with some of the main concepts Lippmann is working with--"freedom of speech," "freedom of opinion," "liberty," "right," "debate," "finding the truth," "toleration." The connections you make among them and the significances you attach to each will, I think, vary from Lippmann's. All I'm going to do here is mention one way in which you could work--there are others--so now you are on your own. I think you will find your essay easier to write if you first spend a little time trying to get in mind a particular picture of how the truth is arrived at. The picture I am thinking of shows that the final arrival at truth is an individual matter. The ultimate or last step to what the truth is, is made on an individual basis. An analogy such as climbing a mountain may help.

Lippmann's essay defends political freedom--"that is to say, the right to speak freely and act in opposition"--on the basis that at least one other man must speak and be listened to if any one man is to arrive at the truth. In your essay you might find it difficult to say that political freedom is necessary because the final arrival at truth is accomplished through a decision of an individual. You might find it better to defend something more compatible with this notion of arriving at the truth, for example, the right to privacy. One needs privacy. And now wiretapping is wrong. And so is asking personal or pointed questions; each time you engage someone else in conversation you are depriving that person of the solitude necessary to arriving at the truth. (Opposition is like tying a rope onto someone and preventing him from climbing a mountain.)

Perhaps you would prefer to entitle your essay "Privacy--An Indispensable Right." Privacy is now a "practical necessity" not just "a noble ideal" (compare paragraph 1).

Following Lippmann's essay write an essay similar in size, style, and tone, but, of course, using a different notion "of arriving at the truth" and defending a different point.

Final Exercise:

After you have written your next two or three essays and have them in what you consider final form, exchange your essays with a classmate; ask your classmate to make notes on your paper--notes like the ones that you have been making on the readings in this unit. Have him perform Phase I, II and III operations on your essay. After your classmate has written notes on your paper, revise it to clarify what you mean.

Perhaps it would be well if you make a practice of writing notes on your own essays, from now on. These notes will help you in revising your essays.